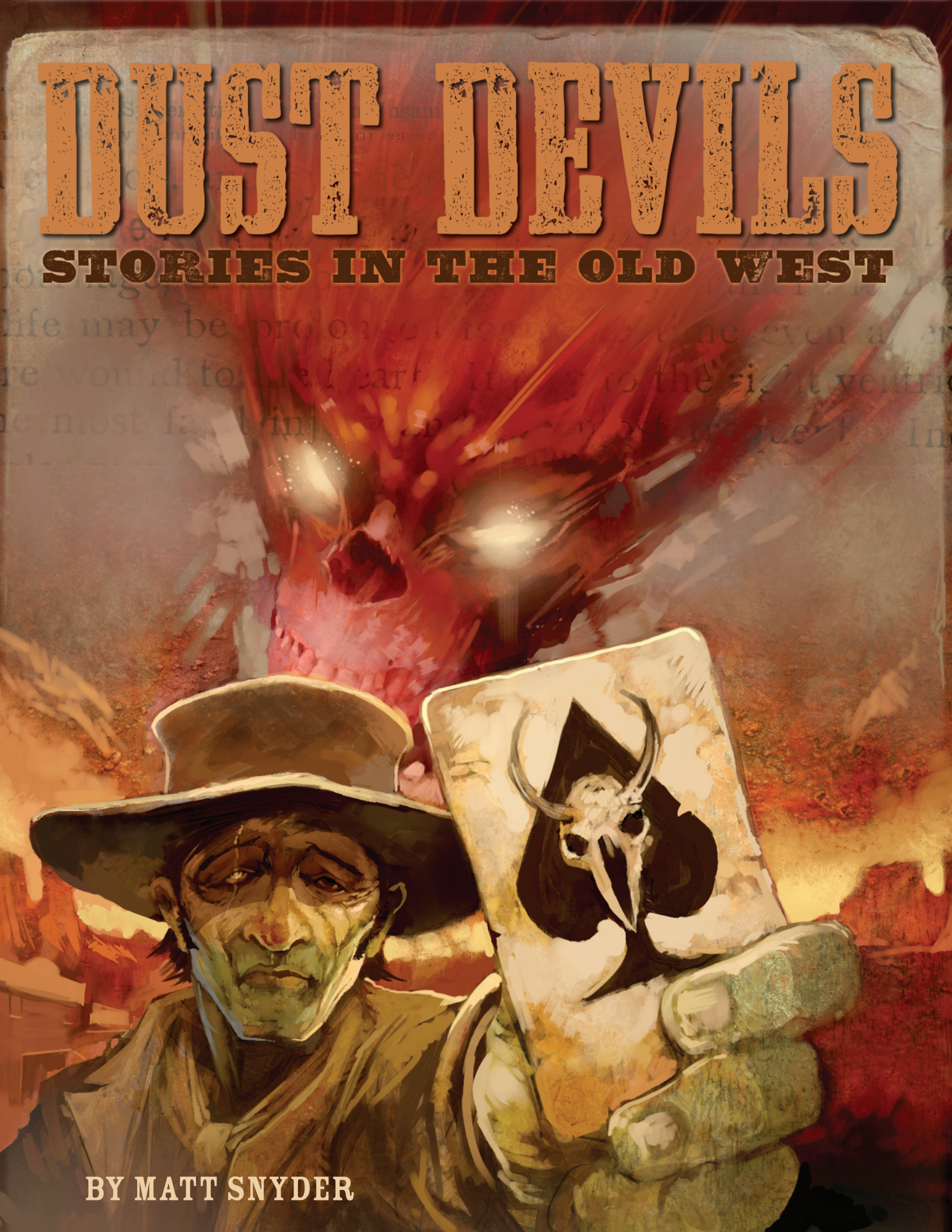
DUST DEVILS

STORIES IN THE OLD WEST



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DUST DEVILS

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INTRODUCTION

DUST DEVILS is a story-telling game set in the rugged old West. Players portray the figures of that era, the figures we all know and love and sometimes hate—gunfighters, vaqueros, cavalrymen, settlers, sheriffs, outlaws, Comanches, Sioux, saloon girls, prospectors and more. They're the recognizable roles seen in Western films or figures from the history and myths of the Old West.

There are outlaws like William Munny, seen in *Unforgiven*, and real-life killers like John Wesley Hardin. There are anti-heroes like Ethan Edwards, seen in *The Searchers*, or historical legend "Wild Bill" Hickok. And, there are those lovable scoundrels like Brett and Bart Maverick or John Henry "Doc" Holiday. There are legendary Indians like Geronimo, Red Cloud, Crazy Horse and many more.

In DUST DEVILS, players explore these characters of the West, real and imagined, as they survive in a rugged, lawless land and wrestle with their Devils, the dark secrets, troubled pasts, and basest vices that haunt their existence.

Will these characters redeem their seedy pasts? What will happen to the other people in their lives as they wrestle with their Devils? Is violence the only way to survive in the West? Players will answer these tough questions by playing the game and crafting a story together with fellow players.

DUST DEVILS is homage to the American West, particularly to the West as it is portrayed in film and fiction. This game is much more about legend than history, more about story than fact.

The ultimate example of a Devil-haunted character is William Munny, played by Clint Eastwood in the 1992 film *Unforgiven*. At first, Munny is amusing as Munny wrestles with his Devil. He appears to be a poor farmer, reformed from his violent youth. "I ain't like that no more," he says. But the truth is, he's lousy at reform. One can't help laughing at him along with the Schofield Kid, the young hot shot he partners with. Munny can't farm. He can barely ride his sway-backed horse. Hell, he can't even shoot straight.

But, then something happens, and Munny and his old friend, Ned, find themselves back at their violent ways with the Schofield Kid as they try to avenge a cut-up whore. When the town's brutal sheriff kills Ned, Munny snaps. His struggle isn't amusing any more. It's terrifying. The Devil's got him by the throat. Despite his best intentions and the influence of his dead wife, William Munny becomes a fearsome avenger. The Schofield Kid ain't laughing anymore. Munny guns down six men, including the sheriff, single-handed.

As film's the epilogue explains, Munny is a "known thief and murderer, a man of notoriously vicious and intemperate disposition." He certainly is that, but is he more? What drove him to violence? Why did he kill for his friend? Why did he kill for women? Is his murder a crime or is it justice? Can a murderer redeem himself, and can he do so through violence?

Even in real-life history we see troubled souls dealing with the Devil. Take Jesse James. You can have him! He was a real-life, no-good son of a bitch and criminal, and most folks knew it then, too. And, yet, he and his brother's gang managed to capture some Robin Hood-style affection from the press and local populace. What drove Jesse James to rob and murder? What haunted his soul, and drove him to violence? Was it greed? Hatred for the North? DUST DEVILS encourages players to find out, by creating their own account, or imagining together a similar outlaw and seeing what happens as they play out the outlaw's story.

In the great Westerns on film or the legends and history of the West, these issues keep coming to the fore. A common question surfaces again and again. Is violence against others necessary to survive in the wild West?

Shoot or give up the gun?

This book explains exactly how players can figure that out for themselves.

ABOUT THE GAME

Dust Devils is a game, an activity for a few people to create a fun and meaningful Western story as they play together. There must be at least two players to play, but anywhere from three to five players generally works best.

The game requires standard playing cards, poker chips, a few sheets of paper and some pencils. Players use the playing cards to figure out what happens the game, and how the story plays out.

One player is the Dealer, a special role in the game unlike the other players. The Dealer acts like a movie director, setting the stage for the other players and guiding the supporting characters as the story progresses. The Director's main goal is to set up tense situations and scenes that force other players to confront their characters' Devils. From this tension and conflict, a story erupts into play. This book will show you how to do that.

Each other player creates a single character that he or she will portray in the game. These are the *main characters* of the story. Players can portray any type of character they care to imagine. This book will show players how to do that, too.

Fortunately, all Dust Devils characters follow a simple set of rules that the players and Dealer use in the game to resolve scenes. Usually, the rules tell players how many cards they use in the game, and what kinds of things their characters can do.

Chapter One: Character Round Up, explains how to create these characters, including help on how to create the most important aspect of each character — the Devil. Next, *Chapter Two: The Laws of the West*, explains the rules all players follow to play the game, including how and when to use the cards and poker chips, and how your character changes throughout the game. *Chapter Three: Reach For It*, instructs players and Dealers how to oversee the game and how to make the game dramatic, exciting, and meaningful. This includes a ready-made scenario you can use to play right away! All along the way, there are examples to show exactly how these rules and advice work. Then, *Chapter Four: How the West Was Won* provides an overview of the American West in both fact and fiction.

Finally, this book includes *Beyond the West*, an appendix of three alternate settings for the game. Break out of the Western and leap into super-spy action, samurai drama, and gritty urban tragedy.

Chapter One

CHARACTER ROUND UP

Characters are defined by their Scores, a pair of Traits, a Past and Present, and a Devil. This chapter explains how create each of these items to fully detail a character for play. The Devil is the most important aspect of any character, but players often create their characters' Devils last. See page 9 for more about the Devil.

FOUR SCORES

All DUST DEVILS characters have four Scores: Hand, Eye, Guts, and Heart. These Scores represent the a character's influence on the game and story, and the Scores help specify what characters do in scenes of the story. Players use the scores to determine how many cards they receive from the dealer as their characters enter conflict.

Each Score matches up with a character's natural abilities. Each Score also matches up to a playing card suit.

♠ Hand represents physical action—anything a character does with his hands or body. A player might use Hand to have his character kick down the door to the whorehouse or rope and wrestle a steer in the dirt. Hand corresponds to the suit of Spades.

♦ Eye measures a character's wits and intellect. Eye might test a character's ability to sense a canyon ambush or test his knowledge of Apache traditions. Eye is associated with the suit of Diamonds.

♣ Guts reflects a character's vigor and health as well as his courage and cool. It take Guts to take on the whole Bolivian army, and it might take a lot of Guts to keep your shooting hand steady with a .45 round in your thigh. Guts is associated with the suit of Clubs.

♥ Finally, Heart gauges a character's social competence as well as his heroic—or perhaps villainous—nature. Heart makes the ladies swoon, and it sure comes in handy when you're trying to convince the town to fight the railroad's thugs. Naturally, Heart is associated with the suit of Hearts.

STEP 1: Assign 13 points among your character's Scores. No score can exceed 5.

An example: Dave has an idea for his character. He wants to play a fast-handed gunfighter. He also wants to character to be quick-witted and a bit of a lady killer. The Dealer suggests putting more points into his Hand and Heart to match up with Dave's concept. So, Dave takes the advice and assigns his points like so:

Hand: 5
Eye: 2
Guts: 2
Heart: 4

TRAITS

Dust Devils characters also have two figurative descriptors to highlight the character's most obvious qualities called Traits. In true Western style, Traits are usually written as similes. "Tough as nails" or "Dumb as a post" are two examples.

A player can emphasize his character's Trait in a scene to earn more cards, or he can earn a chip by having the character act contrary to his character's Trait. See *Chips*, page 23.

Often, character Traits will help explain, or even inspire what kind of person the character is. For most, the Traits should tie into the character's Devil as well. For example, *Meaner than a mustang* and *Cold as a stone* are good Traits for a character whose Devil is *Cruelty*.

STEP 2: Create two traits for your character.

An example: Dave has his gunfighter's Scores set, and now he starts thinking about what his character is like. He already said the gunfighter was fast, so he creates new Trait: "Fast as greased lightning." And, he also wants to have a Trait that might make the ladies swoon. But, he can't think of a way to say it. He asks the Dealer if he can just write down "Lady killer" as his second trait. It's not quite as flavorful as the first Trait, but the Dealer agrees that it's a good Trait. He writes both down on his character record like so:

* *Fast as greased lightning*
* *Lady killer*

PAST & PRESENT

Dust Devils characters are all about reckoning with the past. To emphasize this, each character has a Past and a Present. These are roles the character excels at in some way, and they should offer a useful range of abilities the character can use in various situations. For example, *Avenger* isn't a very good Present role because the character doesn't really do anything in particular other than seek out those he'd avenge. A much more workable role might be *Gunfighter* or *Outlaw*.

Past and Present roles are often, but not always, occupational. For example, *Marshal* and *Heiress* are suitable Past or Present roles. Players should feel free to create any variety of such roles.

There are many ways to think about Past and Present. For example, a player may want his character's Past to represent his role back East, and his Present to indicate his current situation out in the West. Or, maybe his Past was his character's involvement in the Civil War and his Present his character's new life in the Union's frontier.

The Past and Present can represent great upheaval in a character's life. For example, a character could have *Past: Outlaw* and *Present: Sheriff*. What could have happened to make that change from lawless to lawful? Alternatively, the transition between Past and Present could be more natural. A character could easily go from *Past: Cowboy* to *Present: Cattle baron*. But, even then there remain interesting questions. How did this character acquire his wealth, and did he trample over anyone to get it?

The trick is making a Past and Present that says something interesting about the character. It works best to tie the two with the character's Devil in some way. Often, the difference between Past and Present can help a player figure out a fitting Devil. For example, a character with *Past: Outlaw* and *Present: Sheriff* could have a Devil related to the law, like *Lawless*, *Criminal* or *Killer*.

STEP 3: Choose a Past and Present. Assign four points between the two roles.

WILD AS THE WEST

Here are several Traits you can use for your main character or to inspire your own ideas:

Quick as lightning
Pretty as a little red wagon
Sly as a fox
Smooth as silk
Tongue like a snake
Heart of gold
Loud as the Fourth of July
Slicker than a greased pig
Wilder than a Texas Tornado
Stubborn
Richer than Croesus
Fast as a jackrabbit
Mean spirited
Twitchy as a wagging tail

NOW AND THEN

Here are some Past and Present pairings that might inspire your main character:

PAST	PRESENT
Confederate Soldier	Hired Gun
Horse Thief	Pony Express Rider
Preacher's Daughter	Saloon Girl
Cheyenne Warrior	Union Cavalry Scout
Circuit Judge	Fugitive
Vaquero	Freedom Fighter
Actress	Gambler
Librarian	Pinkerton
Farm Boy	Rail Baron
Prospector	Bank Robber
Pathfinder	Marshal
Pioneer	Missionary

An example: Dave's gunfighter has Scores and Traits. Now he needs to explain something about where his character has been and where he might be headed now. For the Past, Dave decides that he wants something unexpected for a rough-and-tumble Gunfighter. Another player suggests a Past from out East, like a wealthy playboy or a lawyer. Dave likes the idea; he uses *Gentleman* as his Past. Then, Dave easily decides his character's Present. He already decided his character would be a *Gunfighter*. So, he writes down his past and present, and assigns four points between them like so:

Used to be a refined Gentleman (3).
But now is a Gunfighter (1).

THE DEVIL

Finally, every character's got a Devil. It's that ugly side a person doesn't want his preacher to know about. Devil is that element of his soul he's trying to fight, the dark, personal history that he just can't shake no matter how far he rides, how much he drinks, or how many men he kills.

Players can write their characters' Devils as a single word or short phrase. They should also write down a sentence or two explaining the Devil and how it came to his character.

A good Devil for this game stays with a character, no matter how hard he or she tries to solve the problem. It's often some ugly aspect of one's personality, like greed, hatred, or an excuse for violence.

Here are some examples:

- ★ Jack Barnaby never met a man he couldn't shoot. When push comes to shove, he usually shoves ... hard. He's a *Killer*.
- ★ *Might Makes Right*: There's law and then there's Sheriff Meredith. What he says goes, like it or not.
- ★ *Manipulation*: Helen DuBois knows how to get things done and keep her hands clean doing it. She has everyone wrapped around her little finger.

A badly designed Devil is one that can be straightforwardly resolved before the character's story is told through play. For example, one of the most common Devils people like for Westerns is *Revenge*. If the player doesn't craft that Devil correctly, it will cause problems in play. If the character enacts his revenge before his character leaves the game, what does the player do then? Does he have more vengeance to fulfill? How does his Devil affect him after that point? Is the character "finished" at that point?

The trick is making Revenge a problem with the character's identity, rather than a problem with another person or group who wronged the character.

The problem with *Revenge* (and similar troublesome Devils like *Wanted Man* or *Loner*) is that they must be about the character, and not about the objects of their obsessions. The question is not whether the vengeance can be *resolved*—it most assuredly can, presumably by gunning down the poor bastard that did the character wrong—but whether the vengeance can be *redeemed*. Can the character live with his vengeful soul? Will he lose his decency? That's really the ultimate question that players will answer as they finish the character's story in play.

Here's an example of a character with the Devil *Revenge*, and an explanation of how to make it work in play:

Scott makes a character with the following Devil: *Revenge: Get the sons-of-bitches that killed his wife.*

The Dealer tells Scott to reconsider his Devil. He says there's no reason to think Scott's character has done anything wrong or that there's anything troubling about his personality. What if he kills the murderers? Will he just settle down after that?

The two talk about it some. Scott says he was thinking that his character is a U.S. Marshal that sometimes crosses the line—he sometimes can't control his urge to punish people. It's a fine line between justice and revenge, he says! The Dealer likes this much better, and tells Scott to use that in writing his Devils. So, Scott rewrites the Devil, like so:

Revenge (2): U.S. Marshall Colby knows there's a fine line between justice and revenge, and sometimes he steps over the line anyway. Sometimes, people just need to be punished.

A HAUNTED PAST

Part of creating a Devil is setting up a backstory for each character. Players can detail their Devils as much as they like, even down to a single turning point in the characters past, naming supporting characters, or a whole explanation of the character's history. Creating a detailed history will help the Dealer and fellow players introduce interesting twists in the story in play.

However, players may opt to leave details of their characters' Devils vague and uncertain. Doing so allows the player to explain the shadowy details as the story unfolds. For example, Scott can leave the details of Marshal Colby's wife's murder uncertain. That way, when the Dealer introduces a villainous

outlaw, Scott can say the outlaw was responsible in his wife's killing. This is a good technique to tie many characters' Devils together.

THE DEVIL'S DUE

Each character's Devil has a rating from 1 to 3 that the player can choose from session to session. This rating indicates how much the Devil haunts the character. A rating of 1 means the Devil is subtle, a personal flaw kept mostly under control, and the character is able to go about his business for the most part. A rating of 2 indicates seething tension as the character's past begins both to enliven and spoil day-to-day issues. Finally, a character with a Devil rating of 3 is a tempest of dramatic activity; the Devil infects nearly every decision he makes, resulting in spectacular success about as often as is does terrible loss.

At the beginning of each session, the player decides what his character's Devil rating will be. He might take into account the events of a previous session—a particularly devastating encounter with a figure from his criminal past in the previous session might encourage the player to set his Devil rating at 3 as events come back to haunt him. Conversely, someone playing a character for the first time may simply opt to set his new character's Devil rating at 1 and let the Devil stew quietly until things build up in subsequent sessions.

It really is up to the player and how much he wants to deal with the Devil in play. Just keep in mind that the Devil is a forked-tongue snake—the rating can work for or against a player! The Devil may come into play as part of any given conflict. When it does, the Devil results in a modified number of cards for the Deal for that player.

STEP 4: Detail the Devil. Then, set the initial Devil rating at 1, 2 or 3.

An example: Dave is nearly finished creating his gunfighter character. The only thing left is the Devil, and he's stuck. So, the Dealer asks him about his Past and Present. He asks Dave how the character went from gentleman to gunfighter?

Dave thinks a while, and decides that the best explanation is that he lost all his money. Maybe a woman – his wife – stole it and left him. Now, he holds a grudge against her, and he wandered west to earn back his fortune.

The Dealer says the backstory is good, but it's not really about the character – it's about something happened to the character. So, he urges Dave to think of a way that this event made him a changed man, some way it scarred his soul.

Dave says he thinks the character doesn't care about anybody after that, and he doesn't trust anyone. So, he's kind of cold-hearted. That's it! Dave decides his character's Devil is *Cold-hearted*.

Dave decides that to start things off, he'll keep the Devil rating at only 1. His group plans to play their game over a few sessions, so he wants to build the Devil up each session. He writes down the Devil and pencils in a rating, like so:

Cold-hearted (1): After his wife took everything he had, he doesn't give a damn about anybody anymore.

With everything in place, all his character needs is a name. Dave settles on using a nickname, and writes his character's name down on his record: "Gentleman" Jim Harris. Now, he's all ready to play.

CREATING A CHARACTER

STEP 1: Assign 13 points among your character's Scores. No score can exceed 5.

STEP 2: Create two traits for your character.

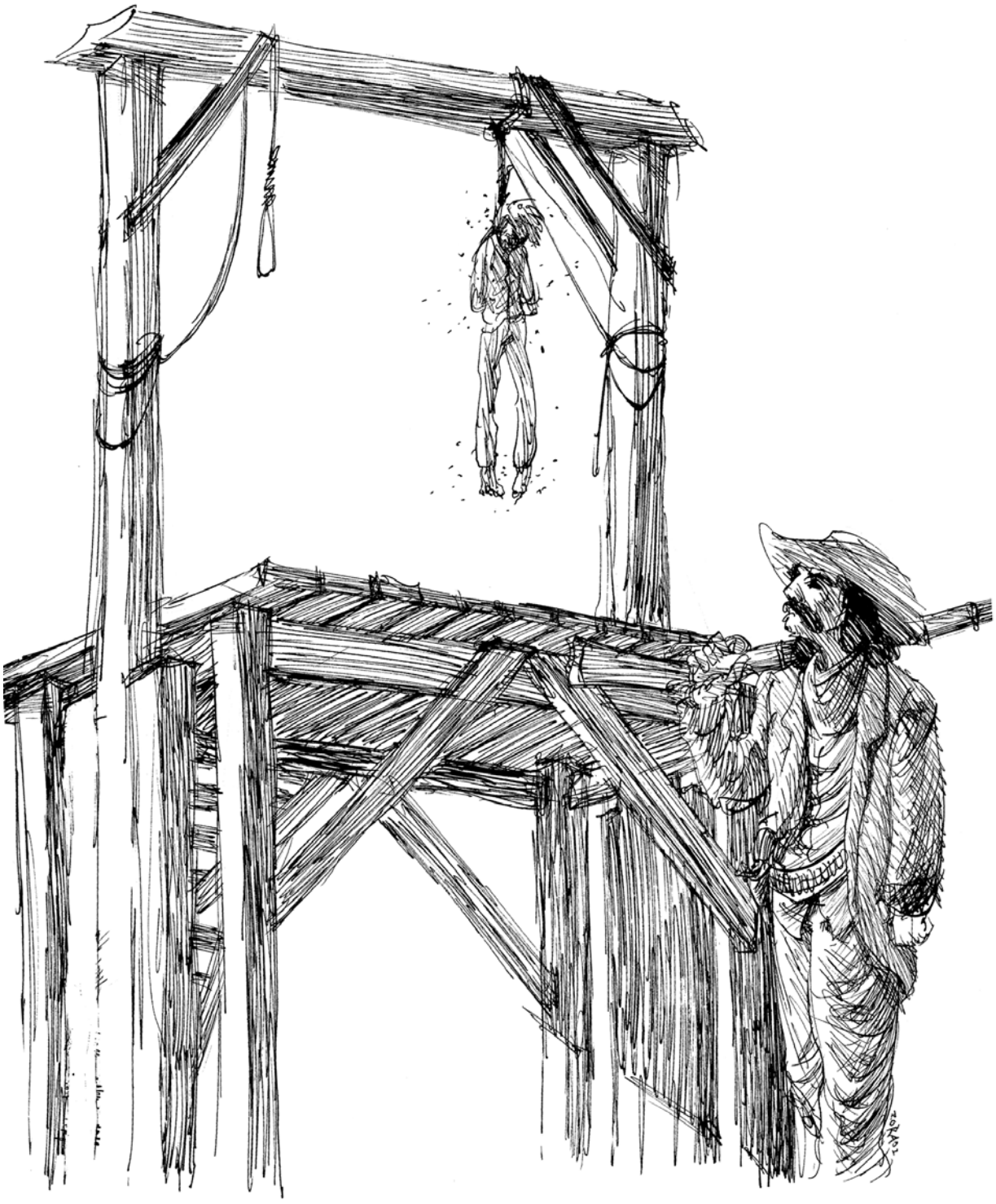
STEP 3: Choose a Past and Present. Assign four points between the two roles.

STEP 4: Detail the Devil. Then, set the initial Devil rating at 1, 2 or 3.

DEVILS

Here are several Devils you can use for your character or for inspiring your own ideas. It helps to write a very brief history explaining your main character's Devil.

Cruelty	Lazy	Coward
Misogynist	Reckless	Manipulator
Drunkard	Loner	Fanatic
Lust	Wrath	Lech
Killer	Hopeless	Proud
Traitor	Tyrant	Bully
Greed	Liar	Spiteful
Brash	Racist	Jealous



Chapter Two

THE LAWS OF THE WEST

THE GAME & THE STORY

In Dust Devils, all players take part in narrating the story. As characters move from place to place and scene to scene, everyone playing the game should take part in describing what's going on, what their characters are doing, and generally what the scene and setting is like. Ultimately, the Dealer has final say in what happens unless conflict occurs. However, during conflicts, the game rules determine who has final say in the story's events. This chapter explains those rules. (For more on the Dealer's role, see *Dealer Advice* on page 31.)

WHAT IS A CONFLICT?

As everyone plays, events occur in the story that must be decided by the players. Will the tense stare-down among characters erupt into gunplay in the streets? Will someone die? Or, will the gambling game go to hell if someone calls cheat? What about the negotiation with the rail baron? Countless situations are possible.

This is conflict. Conflict is any point in the game where at least two players (and usually more!) have different ideas about "what happens next" in the story. Conflict is the most important event in Dust Devils, and resolving conflict with these game rules determines who dies in the gutter, who rides off into the sunset and most of all what kind of story players will tell.

TELLING A LIVELY STORY

As the Dealer and fellow players tell their story, they should consider simple things that help make the events come alive:

- ★ First and foremost, players should consider how their characters – and even their fellow players' characters – think and feel about the events of a scene. Most importantly, players should think about their characters' Devils and how that affects the decisions and action they take. What is a character with the Devil *Greed* going to think about joining a poker game? Will a character with *Killer* regret bloodshed? Players should feel free to voice their thoughts with one another, and they need not "stay in character" to have fun thinking and talking about this.
- ★ Players should consider the five senses. The West is a lively place, filled with sights, sounds, smells and more. Players can bring these senses to life with colorful, vivid description when narrating the game as other players do the same. Does the whiskey make one's stomach turn? How hot and dry is the Texas prairie? How strong is the smell of gunsmoke?
- ★ Players can set the mood of a scene with their narrative contributions. With some thoughtful description, a player can set the scene for any number of moods – tension, irony, fear, melancholy and so on. For example, if a player senses tension that might erupt later into a brawl or gunfight, he might describe the scene as a "cold-staring, finger-twitching affair."

Remember, players should feel free to create elements outside their character when helping describe a scene. This might be as simple as coloring details of the scenery and locale, like naming the saloon, or it might be as important as the introduction of new supporting characters without input from the Dealer.

Most often, conflict happens when the Dealer and one or more players have different ideas for the story and their characters' role in it. However, conflict between players is common in Dust Devils as well. In either case, recognizing conflict is simple. Players should easily recognize when they've reached a moment in the game where the cards can help settle things and help tell the story.

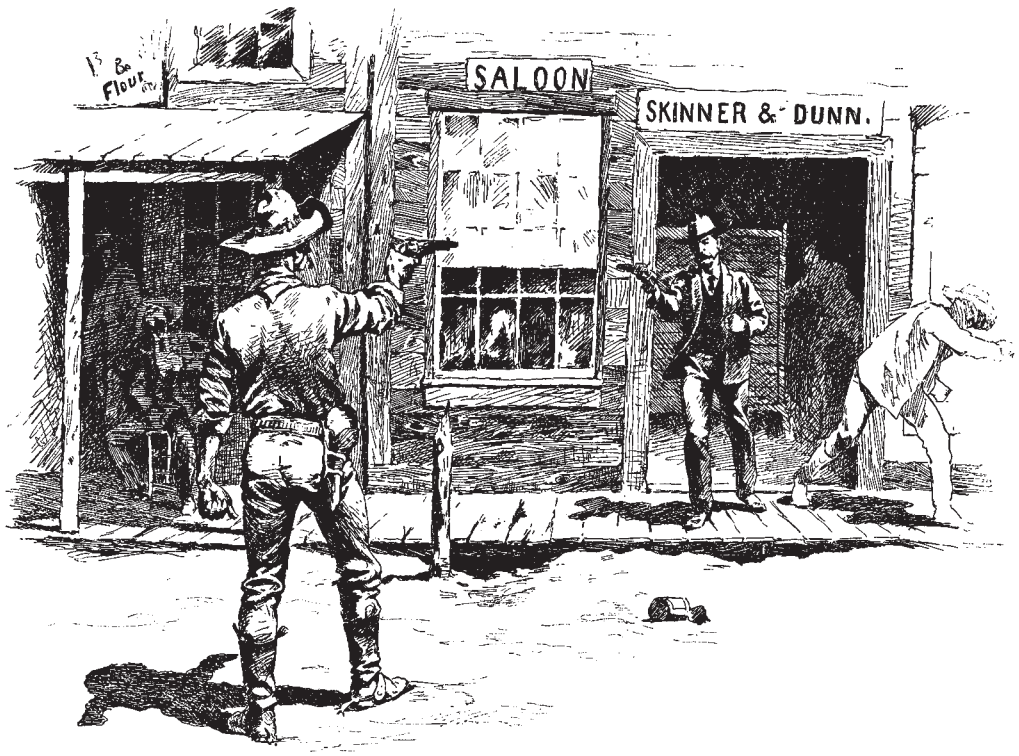
Conflict in Dust Devils is always violent, but it isn't always physical. Sometimes, characters suffer emotional or personal injury that harms their dignity, decency, courage and more without spilling a drop of blood. This chapter explains how this happens, as well as who narrates the outcomes.

So, when a player enters a conflict in the game, that player has accepted that violence will occur. Someone will suffer. It might be his character. It might be someone at the end of his character's gun. That is the ugly truth about the West. The Devil wouldn't have it any other way.

GOALS & OPPONENTS

When a conflict begins, all players announce what their characters' goals are in the immediate conflict. Goals are usually simple, like "I shoot the son of a bitch!" Don't get caught up on specifying every detail of a character's goal; that's what narration is for a little bit later on. Instead, focus on what the character is trying to accomplish, and a basic idea of how he wants to go about doing it. A good rule of thumb is this: If you can't say your character's goal in one sentence, it's probably not a goal. Sometimes, it helps to stop, rethink your goal, and restate it aloud to everyone.

Once players announce their goals, they also decide who opposes their characters' goals. Opponents are usually easy to recognize—any character opposed to a character's intentions is that character's opponent! In case it's unclear, players can ask one another whether their characters are opposed to one another. Characters can, and often do, have many opponents in a conflict. Recognizing opponents is important because it decides which players will compare poker hands against one another. See *The Call* on page 18.



An example: Dave is playing his character, 'Gentleman' Jim Harris. During play, 'Gentleman' Jim gets into a disagreement over cards and money with Jack Kerrigan, a fellow gambler. Conflict begins. Dave tells the Dealer that "Gentleman" Jim wants to walk away with all the money he lost to Jack Kerrigan. And, he explains his plan is to convince everyone else at the table that Kerrigan is cheating, whether he actually is or not.

The Dealer tells Dave he's worried that his goal is too complex – it involves two parts. So, Dave restates his goal. He says, "Ok, Jim's goal is just to get everyone's money back from Jack Kerrigan, the cheater."

The Dealer approves, then states his own goal. "Jack Kerrigan's aim is to take everyone's money, come hell or high water!" He reminds Dave that Jim's opponent is Jack Kerrigan, whom the Dealer controls as a supporting character. Likewise, 'Gentleman' Jim is Jack Kerrigan's opponent. They'll simply compare their final hands to one another in this conflict.

THE DEAL

The Dealer deals a number of playing cards (from a standard U.S. poker deck, including the two Jokers) to each player involved. He also usually deals himself a hand because he controls either a supporting character or represents another challenge (see *Stud Hands*, page 32). Success for the players hinges on having the best poker hand they can muster from their cards.

The highest Poker hand in a conflict wins. The winner succeeds at his declared goal, though exactly how he succeeds is up to the narrator (see *High Card Narrator*, page 21). Losers may or may not succeed in their goal; this is also determined by the narrator of the scene.

Players will gain and lose cards as the Dealer works through the Deal. Just leave them on the table face down until everyone's cards are settled and the Draw begins (see *The Draw*, page 18).

INITIAL CARDS

The number of cards dealt depends on the conflict. Each player explains to the Dealer how his character intends to fulfill his goal. The Dealer sizes up the conflict situation and determines which two Scores the character employs. Then, the Dealer deals to the player a number of cards equal to the sum of those two Scores (Score ratings change during play—see *Harm*, page 19).

Frequently, a character may have three or even four applicable Scores in a conflict. Players can easily imagine how Hand, Eye, and Guts apply in a gunfight, for example. However, only two Scores are allowed for the Deal. Players may try to convince the Dealer to use a certain Score, but the Dealer has final say in which two Scores players must use. The Dealer also chooses which two scores his supporting characters use. Again, in this case, players may argue against the Dealer using one Score over another, but the Dealer's decision is final, and players should not let such arguments drag on.

An example: Dave has already announced 'Gentleman' Jim's goal and designated Jack Kerrigan, controlled by the Dealer, as his opponent.

Now the Dealer has to choose two Scores that represent 'Gentleman' Jim's plans. Clearly, Heart is in play, as Jim is trying to help others – a good example of Heart in action. But, for the second Score, the Dealer is torn. Jim's standing up to an armed man, and calling him a cheat. That might take Guts. But, he's also trying to reason with the others, and that takes Eye. The Dealer decides on Guts, and he tells Dave.

But, Dave interrupts. Dave says he really sees this as using 'Gentleman' Jim's smarts and card-playing savvy. The Dealer relents, and he deals Dave his initial cards. Dave receives 4 cards for the Gentleman Jim's Heart Score (currently 4) and 2 cards for his Eye Score (currently 2). Dave now has a total of 6 cards for the Deal.

TRAITS

Now, with their initial cards in hand, players can also receive additional cards based on their characters' Traits. A player receives 1 additional card if one of his character's Traits is relevant or useful in the conflict. Players may only use one of their character's Traits in a conflict; they do not receive 2 cards if both Traits are relevant, for example.

An example: Dave is still hoping for more cards in his confrontation with the gambler. He looks to his Traits. *Lady Killer* isn't going to help. But, *Fast as Greased Lightning* might. While it was meant more so for quick-draw gunfighting, Dave tells the dealer he thinks the Trait should apply here as well, because it also represents 'Gentleman' Jim's quick wits. The Dealer agrees, and reminds other players that Traits can work in many kinds of situations. He hands Dave an extra card for the conflict. Dave now holds 7 cards.

Alternatively, a player receives 1 chip if his character deliberately acts counter to one of his Traits. Again, only one of the character's two Traits may apply in a conflict (see *Chips*, page 23).

An example: Instead of gaining an extra card for his *Fast as Greased Lightning Trait*, Dave decides he really needs another chip. So, he gives the card back to the Dealer and alters his intentions a bit. Dave tells the Dealer that 'Gentleman' Jim is taking it real easy and slow, trying to calm everyone down with gentle hand motions and calm talk. He explains to the Dealer this is contrary to his usual quick and furious actions, which counters to his *Fast as Greased Lightning* Trait. The Dealer recognizes this, and hands Dave a single new chip. Dave now still has his same 6 initial cards, but he earned an extra chip.

THE DEVIL

The Devil can provide additional cards. However, the Devil can also take cards away!

If a character is acting in accordance with his Devil, the Dealer deals the player a number of extra cards equal to the character's Devil rating. However, if a character acts contrary to his Devil's nature, the Dealer penalizes the player by taking back a number of cards equal to the character's Devil rating. When the Dealer penalizes a player by taking back cards, he offers in compensation 1 chip. See *Chips*, page 23.

The Devil similarly affects supporting characters the Dealer controls. All Devil rules apply to supporting characters, including the reward of chips for supporting characters.

Not all situations invoke the Devil. In some conflicts, the Devil neither helps nor hinders a character. As always, players can talk it over with the Dealer, but the Dealer delivers the Devil's judgment!

An example: Unfortunately for Dave, the Dealer informs him that 'Gentleman' Jim isn't following *Cold-Hearted* in his efforts to make the cheating gambler back down.

Dave argues that 'Gentleman' Jim's really trying to be greedy, but the Dealer reminds him that greed isn't really related to his Devil. Plus, the other gamblers might save

some of their stolen cash thanks to 'Gentleman' Jim's efforts. The Dealer decrees that 'Gentleman' Jim is going against his Devil. Because 'Gentleman' Jim's Devil rating is 1, the Dealer takes back 1 card from Dave's pile of cards and hands Dave 1 new chip. Dave now has only 5 cards in his hand. But, so far, he has also earned 2 new chips!

To make things worse, he informs Dave that the opposing gambler, Jack Kerrigan, has a Devil called *Cheater* with a rating of 2. Clearly, the Dealer explains, Jack Kerrigan is cheating, and the Dealer hands himself 2 additional cards (he already dealt himself some initial cards based on Kerrigan's Scores and an additional card for a Trait). He now holds 9 cards total for Jack Kerrigan!

THE DRAW

With the Deal complete, characters can pick up their cards and examine their hands. They may have a large number of cards—possibly more than a dozen. This is common. From these many cards, players try to assemble the best 5-card poker hand they can.

To help improve his hand, a player may discard some cards and draw an equal number of new cards. To do this, he refers to his character's Past and Present. If either Past or Present role is relevant or useful in the conflict situation, the player may discard up to a number of cards equal to the Past or Present rating and receive an equal number of new cards from the Dealer.

Players may use only the Past or the Present to draw new cards in a given conflict; they cannot use both. Players describe their characters' intentions in a scene, and the Dealer ultimately decides whether Past or Present is relevant.

An example: Dave has picked up his 5 cards, but he's not happy with his hand. He wants more cards, so he looks to 'Gentleman' Jim's Past and Present. Dave tells the Dealer that his *Gentleman* Past certainly applies in this situation because 'Gentleman' Jim is trying to be the better man, and call out the rascal across the table. The Dealer agrees with this. Dave also inquires whether his *Gunfighter* Present applies here, because a gunfight could break out at any minute. The Dealer says no, explaining that Dave has already said that 'Gentleman' Jim is acting counter to his nature by deliberately trying to calm everyone down. Dave can only draw new cards based on his *Gentleman* Past, which has a rating of 3. He likes some of his cards, so he discards only 2 cards (he could have discarded up to 3 cards). The Dealer then hands Dave 2 new cards from the deck.

THE CALL

When all players and the Dealer receive all their cards, the Dealer Calls, and everyone shows his hand. A player may have several cards in his hand (maybe more than a dozen), but he can play only up to five cards. Players ignore their excess cards; only the five cards a character plays at Call count toward resolving the conflict. Players with fewer than five cards in their hand simply play all the cards in their hand, all of which count toward resolving the conflict.

Players then compare their poker hands to their opponent players' hands.

In all conflicts, players can follow these simple steps to determine the outcome: Each player compares his hand to his opponents. (For a ranking of poker hands, see *Poker Hands & Harm Values*, page 20.)

1) If he has the best poker hand compared to *all* his opponents, his goal succeeds. The Narrator *must* include his successful goal as part of the story, and his opponents *must* take Harm based on his hand (see *Harm*, below).
2) If he has a better poker hand than one or more opponents, but is in turn beaten by one or more other opponents, the Narrator decides whether his character's goal succeeds or fails and includes his decision as he narrates the story. The Narrator also decides whether any Harm affects any of his opposing characters.
3) If a player does not have a better poker hand than any of his opponents, his goal usually fails. However, the Narrator has final say, and can even allow loser's goals to succeed or partially succeed. Regardless, the player's losing hand cannot inflict Harm on anyone.

Note that it is possible in conflicts with many participants to have more than one player who defeats all his opponents with a superior poker hand. The Narrator must include all such players' successes and Harm effects as he describes the scene.

An example: With all the cards now dealt, the Dealer announces the Call. Dave now holds 5 cards in his hand: 4♣ 8♥ J♦ J♠ A♥. The Dealer holds 9 cards: 2♣ 3♦ 3♠ 6♥ 7♦ 8♠ 10♦ 10♠ K♦.

Dave plays all five of his cards. The Dealer looks his cards over and chooses five to play: 3♠ 3♦ 10♦ 10♠ K♣. Dave and the Dealer compare their hands. Dave has only a Pair of Jacks, compared to the Dealer's Two Pair – 3s and 10s. The Dealer wins. So, the Dealer's goal – that Jack Kerrigan takes everyone's money – now must be part of the narration.

HARM

Characters who lose conflicts lose Scores. It's as simple as that. Conflicts in the West are dangerous that way. They have a way of whittling a poor soul down until the only thing he's got left is to make a deal with the Devil.

When a character loses a conflict, his player subtracts a number of Score points equal to the Harm value of each hand successfully played against him (remember, it's up to the Narrator to decide whether some hands inflict Harm). The player subtracts the Harm points in any combination he wishes from the Scores that correspond to the suits played in the winning Poker combination (Spades corresponds to Hand, Diamonds to Eye, Clubs to Guts, and Hearts to Heart). Only suits on the cards in the combination matter. For example, in a Three of a Kind hand, a player taking Harm chooses only from the suits in the three cards. He should ignore the remaining 2 cards in the hand. When Jokers constitute part of a hand, subtract points only from the suits played in other cards in the poker combination.

Players can restore their characters' Harm by spending chips. This is called Recovery. See *Chips*, Page 23. Harm cannot reduce a Score below 0. Ignore any "excess" Harm. Scores rated 0 cannot be improved with Recovery. Also, Scores rated 0 can initiate The End for a character. See *The End*, page 21.

An example: Not only does Jack Kerrigan take everyone's money, but 'Gentleman Jim' suffers for it! He takes Harm, which reduces his Scores.

The Dealer checks the Harm Values chart. He played Two Pair, which inflicts 2 Harm. Dave groans, because now he's got to reduce some combination of 'Gentleman' Jim's Scores by 2 points.

POKER HANDS & HARM VALUES

Use this chart to compare poker hands and find how much Harm each hand delivers to opponents. The hands below are rank from highest at the top to lowest at the bottom. When comparing "tied" hands, the highest card among the hands wins. If high card ties, compare suits. Suits rank from highest to lowest as follows: Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs.

ROYAL FLUSH—5 highest cards in sequence, all same suit: 10♦ J♦ Q♦ K♦ A♦	5 Harm
STRAIGHT FLUSH—5 cards in sequence, same suit: 5♣ 6♣ 7♣ 8♣ 9♣	5 Harm
FOUR OF A KIND—4 cards with identical rank: Q♣, Q♦, Q♥, Q♠	4 Harm
FULL HOUSE—3 cards with identical rank and 2 cards with identical rank: J♠ J♥ J♠ 9♦ 9♥	4 Harm
FLUSH—5 cards all same suit: 3♠ 6♠ 7♠ 10♠ Q♠.	3 Harm
STRAIGHT—Any 5 cards in sequence: 6♣ 7♦ 8♦ 9♥ 10♠.	3 Harm
THREE OF A KIND—3 cards with identical rank: K♣, K♥, K♠.	2 Harm
TWO PAIR—2 cards with identical rank: A♣, A♦, 8♥, 8♠.	2 Harm
PAIR—2 cards with identical rank: 5♦ 5♥	1 Harm
HIGH CARD—Highest available card: A♣	1 Harm

WILD CARDS – Jokers are Wild Cards. They count as any card necessary to complete any of the above combinations.

The Dealer's poker combination is only the four cards in the Two Pair. They are: 3♦, 3♠, 10♦, 10♠. Only Diamonds and Spades suits are in this combination of cards. So, Dave must subtract 2 Score points from either 'Gentleman' Jim's Eye Score (Diamonds) or 2 points from his Hand Score (Spades). Or, Dave may choose to subtract 1 point from each Score. He cannot choose to subtract Scores from Guts or Heart. Dave decides to subtract 1 point from each, and he pencils in his reduced Scores on his character record.

It's important to remember that while a character loses Scores, the Harm inflicted may or may not be actual physical harm. It's up to the Narrator to explain the injury or reason for Score loss.

An example: Dave decided to subtract one point each from 'Gentleman' Jim's Eye and Hand Scores.

One way the Narrator could explain that: Jack Kerrigan pulls a Derringer pistol and shoots 'Gentleman' Jim, grazing his forehead. The blood trickling into his eyes explains his

reduced Eye Score. And, the pain keeps him from leveling his usually steady shooting hand, explaining the reduced Hand Score.

But, the Narrator could narrate the same hand quite differently, and physical violence isn't necessary. Instead of shooting 'Gentleman' Jim, Jack Kerrigan "wounds" him with a clever, albeit mendacious, argument that convinces the other gamblers that, in fact, 'Gentleman' Jim is the cheater. He bids them good day. 'Gentleman' Jim is so angry at being duped he's shaking violently, and can't bring himself to reach for his pistol and level it in Kerrigan's direction.

HIGH CARD NARRATOR

Dust Devils is a game for creating stories. Conflict offers the most powerful storytelling opportunity for players, and all players in a conflict have a shot at winning the rights to become Narrator.

In each conflict the single player with the highest single card laid at Call is the Narrator (this includes the Dealer). Compare only cards that are part of the five cards players use for their poker hand. Ignore all other cards. When card ranks tie, compare the suits of the tied cards. Spades ranks highest, followed by Hearts, then Diamonds, and finally Clubs. For example, the Q♠ ranks higher than the Q♦.

In many cases, the player with the highest winning hand will play the high card. However, even the lowest ranking poker hand can the yield the high card—an Ace, for example.

Any other player may bid chips to become Narrator. The player who bids the most chips becomes Narrator. See *Chips*, page 23.

The Narrator must include two things in his account. First, he must tell how winners' goals succeed. Second, he must see that winners' Harm affects their opponents. Beyond those restrictions, the Narrator has complete authority in telling the story for the duration of the conflict. Other players can make suggestions, or explain more details about their characters' intentions. But, the Narrator has final say in what actually happens in the story.

But, in the meantime, the Narrator has distinct advantages, and can really stir things up at critical moments in the story. Often, the Narrator will steer outcomes and future scenes to his character's favor. This tremendous power is flexible.

Remember, the Narrator also decides whether conflict losers' goals are actually fulfilled, so long as it does not contradict the winners' goals. And, Narrators can even choose to have "partial" winners' Harm inflicted on opponents (see *The Call*, page 18). In some cases, the Narrator's own character is that loser or partial winner, and he'll happily see his otherwise failed goals fulfilled and Harm inflicted!

Once the Narrator explains all details of the conflict, the Dealer resumes control of the story until the next conflict occurs.

THE END

All stories end. In Dust Devils, each character moves toward his story's end as he suffers Harm. When Harm reduces at least one of a character's Scores to 0, that character's story is almost ended.

The player continues to play normally. He may continue to help narrate the story, and participate normally in conflicts that do not require the 0-rated Score. However, should the character take part in any conflict requiring at least one 0-rated Score, that conflict will be his last. This is called The End.

During The End, the player uses his character's Devil rating in place of the 0-rated Score to determine how many cards he receives in the Deal. He still adds the other Score to this total. (If the character must use two Scores that are both 0, then the player receives cards equal to double the current Devil rating.)

In addition, the player automatically becomes Narrator for the conflict. If two or more characters in the conflict are at The End, their players compare highest single cards in their poker hands. The player with the highest value card is Narrator. Other players with characters experiencing The End may also bid chips to become Narrator instead. See page 24 for more on bids.

Scores reduced to 0 cannot be restored normally. The Score is "stuck" at 0. The only means to increase a 0-rated Score is Redemption, which is awarded by another player during that player's The End. For more about recovery see page 24. For details on Redemption, see page 26.

DELAYING THE END

Desperate players may delay their characters' final scene. There are three ways to do so.

First, players can carefully choose which conflicts their characters enter. It may be worthwhile to concede would-be opponents' goals, thus avoiding conflict and Harm. Players can Fold once they enter a conflict, which effectively delays a conflict and avoids Harm. See page 24.

Second, players can frame their characters actions in conflicts such that the Dealer will not require them to use a 0-rated Score in the Deal. For example, a character with a 0-Rated Hand Score could emphasize his character's attempts to defuse a brawl and potential shoot out with calm talk and clever negotiation. The Dealer probably won't require Hand in such a conflict, and choose Guts, Eye, or Heart instead.

Finally, characters can delay The End by spending chips. Each chip spent earns the player a single card in the Deal and avoids use of a 0-rated Score. Players can spend up to their Devil rating in chips for each 0-rated Score in this way to delay The End. For more details, see page 26.

NARRATING THE END

When The End arrives, the player and the Dealer should be keenly aware of the importance of the climactic scene. The player should make every attempt to enter such a final conflict in a way that involves his Devil. Reaching The End may indeed mean the character will be dead and gone. However, the character's

actual fate is up to the Narrator. He may die, retire, go mad, settle down, move on or otherwise end his struggling days.

The player should carefully consider the results of his character's last stand. For example, if the Devil rating draws a winning hand (i.e., if the character wins the conflict), it could indicate that the Devil has finally taken hold of the character. Only his desperate effort to fall back on the support of Devil allows the character to find redemption, maybe only for others in his life. Conversely, a character might succumb to his Devil in a terrible, tragic ending. He passes on, infamously, having failed to redeem himself or others.

This is really a chance to go out in style and steal the show as narrator. Players should make every effort to make their characters' last conflicts memorable and dramatic. See page 27 for an example narration of The End.

CHIPS

Players use their characters and playing cards to create a story. Players can also use chips to reap rewards in key scenes and influence events and outcomes in the story. Players can use common poker chips or other tokens, like coins, to exchange with the Dealer during play.

The Dealer controls an inexhaustible supply of chips to distribute. This is called the bank. Chips in the bank are unusable by any character, including the Dealer's supporting characters. The Dealer must assign chips to each of his supporting characters when he creates the characters, or he can earn chips for his supporting characters during play. See *Earning Chips*, below.

Characters may possess any number of chips. Characters begin play with no chips. However, for short, one- or two-session games the Dealer may wish to let players begin with 3-4 chips. The Dealer may also want to allot a similar number to supporting characters he controls.

EARNING CHIPS

There are three means to earn chips during play. In all cases, players earn chips immediately, and they may spend the chips subsequently in the same conflict for various advantages. (See *Spending Chips* on page 24.)

- First, a player earns 1 chip in any conflict where his characters acts counter to one of his Traits. For example, a character has the trait *Meaner than a sack of snakes*. If the player begins a conflict by describing his characters gentle and kind intentions, he immediately earns 1 chip from the Dealer because the character is acting counter to his Trait. Players can use only one Trait per conflict.

- Second, a player earns 1 chip in any conflict where his character resists his Devil. The Dealer always has final say in whether a character's Devil is in play. If the Dealer decides that a character is acting counter to his Devil, then he awards the player 1 chip and takes away a number of cards equal to the Devil rating. The Dealer always awards 1 chip, not a number of chips equal to the Devil rating.

- Finally, players can earn chips by betting Stakes in a conflict. In any conflict, a player can bet any number of his own chips in a gamble to double his bet. The Dealer may also place Stakes for supporting characters he controls, earning or losing chips as other players do.
  1) If the player's poker hand defeats all his opponents, he keeps his chips *and* earns an equal number of new chips from the bank.

2) If the player's hand defeats one or more opponents, but is also defeated by one or more of his opponents, the player keeps his chips, but wins no new ones from the bank.
3) If the player's hand defeats none of his opponents in a conflict, the player loses his chips, and his chips return to the bank.

Note that Stakes are always between a player and the bank, regardless of who the player's opponent is in the conflict. The Dealer puts lost chips with all other unused chips in the bank; he can't assign them to another character, for example. Similarly, Stakes are not bets between players where winners keep the loser's chips.

SPENDING CHIPS

Once earned, chips are a valuable resource to players and the Dealer. Chips can greatly affect the outcome of each character's story, and they are particularly powerful when used by a player during The End. Players and the Dealer may spend chips to do any of the following options:

- During the Deal, a player (or the Dealer) may spend 1 chip to receive one additional card from the deck. The player may not spend more than 1 chip to gain additional cards. (Players may spend 1 chip to earn an additional Draw, however. See the following option.)

- During the Draw, a player (or the Dealer) may spend 1 chip and discard 1 card to receive a new card from the Dealer. The player may not spend more than 1 chip to gain an additional Draw.

- Any time before the Call, any player (or the Dealer) may spend 1 chip to fold, thereby removing his character from the risks and rewards of a conflict. Folding is a way to exit a tense situation without solving the problem. Chances are, the character will have to deal with the conflict sooner or later. When a player folds, his character's goal must remain unresolved, though the issue may return in a later conflict. Additionally, the character suffers no Harm from other characters.

  Any player who places Stakes prior to folding immediately loses his Stakes, and returns the chips to the bank.

- A player may bid any number of chips to become Narrator during a conflict, overriding the player with the high card. And, any player may escalate his bid any number of times. The player who bids the most chips becomes Narrator, even if he does not hold the highest single card. He returns a number of chips equal to his bid to the bank. Players with losing bids retain chips they bid.

  The Dealer may bid to become Narrator, but he may only bid chips from one supporting character. He cannot combine chips from multiple supporting characters to bid higher, for example.

  If two or more players tie for the highest bid, then the player with the highest single card among the tied players becomes Narrator.

  Players who do not control a character in a conflict may bid to become Narrator. However, they cannot win against an equal bid because they have no high card to compare for the tie.

  See *High Card Narrator*, page 21.

- A player may spend chips to *recover* Harm his character has suffered during play. Players cannot recover any Harm for a Score in this way if the Score is at 0.

  First, the player announces his plans for recovery before any new conflicts have begun. This

OUT OF HARM'S WAY

When players demand recovery scenes, they can suggest how their characters restore Score values. Creative players can imagine a huge variety of entertaining recovery scenes. The scenes are an opportunity to reveal more about the character and how the character copes with stress, pain, grief, and loss. Examples might include:

ACTIVITY	SCORES
Drinking and carousing at the saloon	Heart, Guts
Target practice on a row of tin cans	Eye
Splitting wood	Hand
Going under the knife, with a lot of whiskey	Hand, Eye
Carving his enemies' names into his bullets	Guts
Drinking coffee around the fire	Heart
Performing the Ghost Dance	Guts
Going back to the family farm	All
Taking a bath and smoking a cigar	All

begins a new scene—a recovery scene. The player explains the scene, describing what his character does to recover Harm. The Dealer and other players may participate in narrating the scene, perhaps also spending chips to recover Harm for characters they control. However, during the recovery scene, no new conflicts can erupt. Conflicts can resume immediately after the recovery scene is complete.

To recover 1 Score value, the player must spend a number of chips equal to his character's current Score plus 1. Players may restore Scores this way as many times as they wish during a recovery scene, but they cannot exceed the Score's original rating.

An example: 'Gentleman' Jim has suffered harm after tussling with Jack Kerrigan. His Hand Score is currently 1, but normally his Hand Score is 5. To restore the Hand Score completely, Dave will have to spend a lot of chips, increasing the Score by 1 for each payment. In total, Dave has to pay 14 chips (2 chips + 3 chips + 4 chips + 5 chips = 14 chips). Alternatively, Dave could restore the Score to only 3, which would cost just 5 chips (2 chips + 3 chips = 5 chips).

Dave decides to spend the 5 chips and restore 'Gentleman' Jim's Hand Score to 3. He describes the scene to the rest of the players—'Gentleman' Jim finds the poker player who won Jack Kerrigan's pocket watch. He buys the watch for $100, and takes it out into the woods where he uses the gold watch for target practice. 'Gentleman' Jim empties his pistol and leaves the broken watch hanging on a tree, its hands pointing to midnight—or is it high noon?

★ A player may spend chips to delay The End. When the Dealer informs the player he must use a 0-rated Score in a conflict, the player may instead spend any number of chips up to his character's Devil rating. In effect, the chips replace his 0-rated Scores and his Devil rating in the Deal. Each chip he spends this way earns 1 card in the Deal.

In the case where the player must use two 0-rated Scores, the player may spend a number of chips up to twice his character's Devil rating.

As is always the case in all conflicts, the Dealer still decides whether the character's Devil is relevant in the scene and either awards or penalizes cards accordingly.

An example: Dave managed to restore 'Gentleman' Jim's Hand Score, but his Heart Score is at 0. Hot on the trail of Jack Kerrigan, he tries to convince a local marshal that he's not the man in the wanted poster. The Dealer informs Dave that he must use Jim's Guts Score and his Heart Score. If he uses the Hearts Score, 'Gentleman' Jim enters The End.

But, Dave doesn't think this is a fitting last scene for 'Gentleman' Jim. He wants to last a little while longer – long enough to confront Jack Kerrigan once more. So, he decides to spend some chips to delay The End.

First, the Dealer gives Dave 2 cards for his Guts Score. Then, the Dealer tells Dave he must replace his Hearts Score with his Devil rating of 2. Instead, Dave announces he'll spend chips to delay The End. Dave can spend up to 2 chips, which is the Devil rating. He does, and the Dealer gives him 2 more cards – one card for each chip. These chips replace the Devil and delay The End.

In addition, the Dealer informs Dave that 'Gentleman' Jim's acting counter to his Devil, which is *Cold-hearted*. Dave described how 'Gentleman' Jim was sweet-talking the marshal, trying to make friends – not exactly a cold-hearted act. So, the Dealer penalizes Dave by taking back 2 cards (because his Devil rating is 2). The Dealer also immediately awards Dave 1 chip.

'Gentleman' Jim's in a tight spot, but regardless of the outcome Dave has delayed The End.

★ Finally, when a player's character enters The End, he can spend any number of chips to either Harm or Redeem other characters. The player may both Harm and Redeem other characters during the End. However, to do either one, his poker hand must defeat at least one opponent's poker hand.

To Harm other characters, the player may spend any number of chips to deal an equal amount of Harm to *any* character in the game, even if the other character isn't in the current conflict! The player may choose to inflict Harm on any Scores he wishes; he's not limited to Scores that correspond to his hand. Then he may apply the Harm against any Score or combination of Scores on any character. This Harm is in addition to any Harm the player's hand deals against defeated opponents' characters.

The player may also spend any number of his remaining chips to Redeem *any* character in the game, even if the other character isn't involved in the scene. This allows the player to restore Scores on other characters, just as if he were spending chips to recover his own Scores. The cost for restoring Scores is the same as recovery, explained previously. Each Score value increase of 1 costs a number of chips equal to the current score rating plus 1.

However, there is one crucial difference. A player who uses chips to Redeem can restore Scores rated at 0. This means the player can restore any Score on any character in the game, except for other characters entering The End. Redeeming a Score from 0 to 1 costs 1 chip.

Players cannot Redeem their own characters during The End; they can only Redeem only other characters. Players cannot Redeem other characters who have also entered The End.

Whenever a player Harms or Redeems others with chips during The End, the Narrator should explain the climactic changes as he tells the story.

An example: At long last, 'Gentleman' Jim faces the no-good cheat Jack Kerrigan in the muddy streets of a frontier town. Dave won't delay The End any longer. This is it – The End! Dave and the Dealer work through the conflict, and Dave wins his goal – Shoot Jack Kerrigan – with a Full House. He also has 13 chips saved up. Now it's time to cash in the chips, and it's going to be ugly for Jack Kerrigan.

First, Dave applies the Harm from his winning poker hand. In this case, the Full House deals 4 Harm. The Dealer must apply that Harm to Jack Kerrigan's Scores normally, keeping in mind the corresponding card suits in the hand (the hand has everything except Spades).

Then, Dave can start spending Chips to Harm or Redeem. He aims to do both. First, he Redeems Scott's character, Luke Johnson. Luke has two Scores rated at 0 currently, but he hasn't seen The End yet. Dave restores the first 0 to a value of 2. That costs 3 chips (1 chip + 2 chips = 3 chips). He restores the other 0 to a 1, which costs 1 chip.

Now Dave has 9 chips remaining. He looks over Jack Kerrigan's Scores. After the Full House affected his Scores, Jack Kerrigan still doesn't have a single Score at 0. Dave solves that problem right away. He spends all of his remaining chips dealing 9 total Harm. It's just enough to reduce all of Jack Kerrigan's Scores to 0! No matter what he does, Jack Kerrigan will also face The End very soon.

There aren't any other characters facing The End, so Dave automatically wins rights to be Narrator. He describes the climactic showdown:

" 'Gentleman' Jim confronts Jack Kerrigan in the street, and tries to convince Jack to turn himself in to the law. Kerrigan raises his arms, but at the last minute winks at 'Gentleman' Jim. Gunshots from atop the storefronts and church tower ring out, and 'Gentleman' Jim is riddled with bullets. But, he's still standing. He fires five shots, each hitting one of Kerrigan's hired gunmen. Dave tells everyone that's the Full House in action – taking down all of Kerrigan's thugs.

"Next, he explains the 9 Harm he deals to Jack Kerrigan. 'Gentleman' Jim staggers toward Kerrigan, his smoking pistol unsteady. He squeezes the trigger for the last bullet, but it's hopeless shot. Shot in the arm, Jack Kerrigan crawls on his knees to the nearest awestruck pedestrian, crying like a baby. His whimpering is the last sound 'Gentleman' Jim hears.

"And now for the Redemption," Dave says. "Somewhere across the prairie, Luke Johnson finds a package of money in his saddlebags. It's more money than he's ever seen from someone named James Harris. There's a note. It says, 'Jack Kerrigan. Dead or alive ... ' "

EARNING & SPENDING CHIPS

Earn chips by ...

OPTION	AWARD
Act counter to a Trait	1 chip
Act counter to the Devil	1 chip
Win Stakes in a conflict	Number of chips equal to Stakes wager

Spend chips to ...

OPTION	COST
Gain 1 additional card in the Deal	1 chip
Gain 1 additional card in the Draw	1 chip
Fold and avoid conflict consequences	1 chip
Bid to become Narrator	Highest chip bid
Recover 1 Score value from Harm	Current Score value + 1
Delay The End	Up to Devil rating in chips per 0-rated Score
Harm any character*	1 chip per point of Harm
Redeem any character Score by 1*	Current Score value + 1

* The player's character must be at The End to Harm or Redeem other characters.

Chapter Three

REACH FOR IT

Dust Devils is a group activity. Everyone playing the game will help create a dramatic story. During conflicts particularly, players can use their cards to win special authority to tell the story as the previous chapter explains. But, even outside these tense moments of conflict, the players still maintain a lot of control over how the story develops.

This chapter gives straightforward advice about how to make a good Dust Devils story in play. First, it explains the two modes of play. Second, it includes specific advice for you, the player and the main character you control. Finally, this chapter advises you, the Dealer, on directing the game's story, managing supporting characters, and crafting dramatic situations for your players.

TAKES ALL KINDS

Playing Dust Devils takes shape in two kinds of play—conflict play and regular play.

Conflict Play—First, play occurs during conflicts. Players use cards and the game rules from Chapter Two. One player with the high card is the narrator, and has final say in what happens in the story as a result of the conflict.

Regular Play—Second, play occurs without conflict, or "outside" conflict. This kind of play is common and often easy-going. Such play will take up the majority of time during the game. The Dealer and the players talk freely among one another, and everyone has the opportunity to make suggestions aloud about what happens, to talk with each other as their characters would talk, to add details to the scene, and to create a story together. Players can request scenes or alter the story, even aggressively.

However, during regular play, the Dealer has final say in what happens. Think of the Dealer as having final authority in regular play in much the same way the person with the high card has final say during conflict play. The Dealer can approve any scene requests from players if he chooses. Alternatively, he can alter those suggestions, or outright deny them, approving other ideas or his own ideas.

PLAYER ADVICE

As a player, don't let your main character sit in the saddle. Jump right into action, with your character's Devil as a guide. Rather than wait around for trouble from the Dealer, you should be raising hell yourself. Announce what your main character is doing out loud to other players. Let the Dealer react to you, rather than the other way around! With your fellow players doing the same based on their character's Devils, your game sessions will be wild, dramatic, and fun.

This is not to say the Dealer won't introduce conflict and adversity. He's going to bring hellfire your way, sure enough. But, by and large, he'll introduce conflict and developments directly related to your characters and their Devils. The conflicts and struggles of game play should be *for* your characters and *about* your characters. Don't be a bystander to the action and drama the Dealer introduces. If the Dealer does introduce seemingly unrelated conflicts, don't let him get away with it. Get involved. Stick you nose where it belongs—in the game's story!

RAISE HELL OR DIE TRYIN'

Dust Devils doesn't give a spit whether your character lives or dies. This game isn't about survival so much as it is about redemption. The only thing that matters is whether or not the Devil gets his due. Does your character have what it takes to decide? Does he have what takes to save his soul? *Shoot or give up the gun*. The rest just doesn't matter.

What that means is that there's precious little point to playing it safe. Everyone knows it ain't smart to get into a showdown with no-good, dirty outlaws. It'll get you dead quick. But this game isn't about safety.

If your character's got a good damn reason to get into a showdown with some no-good killers, then he should go in guns blazing.

Of course, there's no better time to do this than when your character's on his last leg. The game rules provide ample opportunity for players with 0-rated Scores to end their story memorably. Your job as a player is to recognize that and live up to your character's good or bad name.

PLAYER CONFLICTS

Often, DUST DEVILS games result in conflict between main characters. This means that players will inflict Harm on their fellow players' characters, perhaps even leading those main characters to The End. Main character conflicts (rather than main character versus supporting character conflicts) can be very entertaining and dramatic as the key figures in the story tussle.

However, players should agree openly that this is the kind of game they wish to play. Occasionally, players do not like other players Harming their main characters, preferring instead to face adversity and risk of Harm only from the Dealer.

DUST DEVILS usually works best with player conflicts. However, it's a good idea to let everyone to voice their preference at the start of a game, and let the group work out what is acceptable for player conflicts and Harm.

DEALER ADVICE

During regular play, the Dealer's job is that of "director." Guide your fellow players along in the story as they act out their individual character's actions and reactions. Much like a Western movie director, you frame scenes and explain the story situation to other players. Add details and narration of your own, and adapt or revise details offered by other players to keep things consistent and focused. Guide the story, keeping players focused on their characters and especially on their characters' Devils.

It's easy to take that movie director analogy one step further and have the Dealer also write the game's "script." This is not your job as Dealer! Any attempt to set players in a scripted story will fail in this game. The game isn't about writing a story or plot, and then letting fellow players play through it. Rather, this is a game about creating a story *during play* as a group.

However, this is not to say you cannot set up a scene. You should do this often—at least as much as the other players do. But, you should not have a specific plan for how scenes will end before the other players can act through their main characters.

ADVERSITY

One of the most important Dealer roles is providing adversity for main characters. This means you should look for ways to start conflicts with main characters, and then let the game's rules resolve that conflict dramatically.

You are frequently in an adversarial role as the Dealer. But, you must remember your goal isn't so much to destroy a main character as it is to challenge the character's Devil and test his struggle for redemption. It is more important—and more fun—to create adversity that's relevant to a character's Devil than it is to make adversity that's just deadly.

You have two main ways to provide adversity to main characters. The most common, and most important, is by pitting supporting characters against the main characters. See *Supporting Characters* on page 33 for more instruction on creating and using supporting characters.

The other way is to provide hazards—some kind of obstacle that doesn't require a supporting character.

You aren't limited to either supporting characters or hazards in a conflict. You may introduce adversity from supporting characters and hazards at the same time. Or, you can control several supporting characters in a conflict if you wish.

Draw a separate set of cards for each hazard and each supporting character you control in a conflict.

HAZARDS

Hazards can take many forms. A hazard might be a natural event—a rockslide or a terrible snowstorm, for example. It might be a dangerous situation like a cattle stampede or a schoolhouse fire. Hazards can even be other minor characters in the story, like a town mob or a wily bank teller. In these cases, you aren't required to create the people as actual supporting characters with proper Scores and a Devil and so on. Instead, use a simple stud hand to represent the minor characters.

STUD HANDS

Whatever form a hazard takes, the Dealer simply uses a single stud poker hand to represent the hazards the main characters face. A "stud hand" is simply a single draw of cards, with no chance to draw additional cards and no Devil. Here's how it works:

A new conflict starts, and players announce their goals. The Dealer explains the hazard and how it will attempt to prevent the players from reaching their goals. The players receive cards for their main characters' hands normally. The Dealer then draws a number of cards (see the chart on page 48) and makes the best hand he can from them. The hazard can't suffer Harm; main characters simply overcome the hazard and fulfill their goals.

The Dealer cannot place any stakes for the hazard itself, nor can he spend chips for the hazard. Otherwise, resolve the conflict normally.

An example: Long before his final confrontation with Jack Kerrigan, 'Gentleman' Jim Harris finds himself on a runaway stagecoach headed for a precipitous fall near a riverbank. His player, Dave, tells the Dealer that Jim leaps from the stage but not before grabbing his belongings. The Dealer decides this is a good opportunity for adversity in the form of a hazard. He informs Dave it won't be so easy. Dave will first have to win a new conflict to get away safely.

HAZARD STUD HANDS

Hazard level	Examples	Dealer draws
Minor hassle	Crossing a river A restless saloon crowd	3 cards
Big challenge	Rounding up calves in a storm A railroad-hired thug	5 cards
Difficult problem	Cattle stampede at night An armed posse	7 cards
Biblical calamity	A Texas tornado A Comanche army	9 cards

The Dealer tells Dave the situation pretty challenging – he announces a 5-card stud hazard. He deals Dave's cards for Jim normally, then draws 5 cards for himself. Dave plays Three of a Kind to the Dealer's measly Pair, but the Dealer holds the high card. The hazard can't suffer Harm from Dave's winning hand, so the Dealer just narrates the scene.

The Dealer narrates, "Ok, Jim wakes to violent shaking in the coach, and he looks out to see the driver slumped in his seat. Without a word, he leans back in the carriage, kicks open the door, and shoves out the fat Easterner next to him. Then, he reaches up, grabs his bags, and dives out himself. Too bad he forgot his hat. The horses drag the coach violently down the bank and crash into the river. Jim hears them neighing wildly in the water, with the coach dragging them down. What now?"

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Supporting characters are the Dealer's best means to introduce adversity. They pose more interesting adversity to main characters, especially when the Dealer does a good job challenging main characters' Devils, or when the Dealer emphasizes each supporting character's own Devil.

You should create a cast of supporting characters, including unique and special figures that act as important people in the lives of the players' main characters. Such supporting characters might be villainous outlaws, tough sheriffs, a character's darling love interest, his family, rivals, rail barons, ranchers, war chiefs or other similar personalities. Create key supporting characters before play begins. But, you'll have to create some supporting characters spontaneously during play.

Either way, supporting characters should have the potential to affect or trigger a main character's Devil. Often, supporting characters will act as villains or rivals to the player characters. However, allies and love interests with their own Devils make game play more interesting as the all characters seek to reckon with themselves and one another. By giving a supporting character a Devil, you create that character's motivations, and you give yourself a guidepost for how to portray the character.

SETTLING SCORES

Supporting characters have the same attributes as player characters, including Scores, Traits, Past, Present, and a Devil. Most supporting characters should have starting Scores, Traits, and Pasts & Presents equal to starting characters. However, as Dealer, you can choose to increase or decrease those values. For example, you might assign 15 points among an important supporting character's Scores (a key villain, perhaps) rather than the usual 13 points.

Set a Devil rating from 1 to 3, though you may do this "on the fly" during play as the players introduce or elevate important supporting characters through narration. This rating affects the Deal in relevant conflicts just as it does for players. Supporting characters may, therefore, receive more or fewer cards as part of the Deal, and you may earn a chip when one of your supporting characters acts counter to his Devil.

For example, during regular play, Dave says " 'Gentleman' Jim goes to get the sheriff for help!" But, the Dealer hasn't already prepared the sheriff. He just didn't think that would happen. So, the Dealer announces, "Ok, that's fine. Give me a minute or two and I'll create the sheriff."

He thinks for a bit and decides it will be interesting to contrast with 'Gentleman' Jim's Devil, *Cold-hearted*. The sheriff's Devil could be *Old Softy: The law isn't as important as keeping things nice and quiet among family and friends*. He assigns the Devil a rating of 2. Then, the Dealer quickly fills out the rest of the sheriff's Scores and other attributes, and tells Dave about the soft-hearted Sheriff Morgan.

Things could get interesting—maybe Sheriff Morgan will help 'Gentleman' Jim, or maybe he'll become a new adversary. Either way, the Dealer has a solid supporting character to add to the story.

DEALING WITH THE DEVIL

Here are a few techniques that will greatly help a Dealer direct a game session of Dust Devils.

HOWDY, STRANGER

First of all, make an effort to weave main characters' stories together. This doesn't mean that the main characters have to be together in every scene. In fact, whole sessions can work well without the main characters ever meeting! Don't force players to keep the main characters together constantly. You may encourage them to stretch their legs a bit, expanding the scope of the story as the characters interact with supporting characters in divergent scenes.

So, your job is to keep those sometimes ambling characters connected in some way. If a main character has a run-in with a crooked snake oil salesman, for example, then you might want another main character to bump in to the crook behind the general store stuffing his carpet bag full of cash. When players see you tie experiences together like this, they'll become much more interested in what's going on all the time. The story becomes a larger, connected whole, and it's more entertaining for everyone playing.

ROPE 'EM IN

There are many common Western issues for characters to explore: bravery, independence, vengeance, land ownership, lust for gold, or the law to name a few. All are well suited to Dust Devils play. All can easily be boiled down to a crucial decision: *shoot or give up the gun*? Characters should ultimately struggle with whether violence is a good or a bad thing in different situations. It may be easy to pull out your .44 and settle a matter, but is it right? Main characters should walk the line between law and morality.

It's your role as Dealer to emphasize this struggle in play. You do this by keeping players focused on their characters' Devils.

Keep adversity coming. Introduce conflicts as a consequence of decisions made by the main characters. What do supporting characters do when the main characters act? Will supporting characters fight back or get revenge? What kind of violence—physical or otherwise—will supporting characters inflict on the players' characters? You should think in these terms.

STRING 'EM UP

Once you have the players focused on the issues at hand, it's time to hang 'em high. Don't just think about how a supporting character can make it more difficult for a main character to achieve his immediate goal. Think about how a supporting character can affect the player's Devil as well.

Adversity, whether introduced by supporting characters or otherwise, shouldn't be planned-out scenarios with an obvious or "correct" solution. Rather, they should be dilemmas handled any number of ways by the players. Present a problem, not a puzzle to be worked out by the players. The problem should be an issue with many interpretations and many solutions, or sometimes no "good" solutions at all!

CUT 'EM LOOSE

Remember to let go of the reins frequently and let the players drive the game. By setting up tense scenes and situations, you can cut the players loose and let them steal the show. Your job is to respond to the players, and guide them along to The End.

One thing to keep in mind, however, is pacing. If players seem to be drifting or aren't focused on the issues in a particular scene, it's time to move on. Help the players recognize when this happens, and cut to another meaningful scene straight away. Often, the best method is to shock players with a tough conflict they don't expect—wake them up with treachery, violence and calamity!

HELL COMES TO TOWN

All of these Dealer techniques and advice are meant to do one thing—help you recognize and resolve the ultimate moment of redemption or damnation. Like the players, who must not "play it safe" in an effort to reckon with the Devil, you must keep in mind that Dust Devils is about one thing: Urging the main characters toward that climactic moment when they decide to shoot or give up the gun. Always keep that in mind, and be aware of those crucial moments when your players must decide between redemption and damnation. How they deal with the Devil is what this game is all about.

LOADING THE GUN

One of your Dealer duties is preparing for a session of Dust Devils. The game works best when you have a few details prepared ahead of time. Fortunately, you need only prepare a few simple ideas for a fun game.

You may really enjoy preparing for sessions, and you may also enjoy creating rich details and elaborate plans. Be warned! Because the players have a lot of say in how their stories unfold, your plans will often be ignored or unused. The game is wonderfully unpredictable.

It works best if the you know before the session who the main characters are and what their Devils are. That's the best place to begin preparation—using the main characters' Devils as inspiration for the kinds of problems they'll face during play.

For example, if a character has *Greed* as a Devil, then think up ways to tempt him with wealth at the cost of his friends or family. Perhaps he's offered a great deal of money by rail barons to remove his stubborn neighbors from their land to make way for their railroad.

Often, however, you won't know beforehand about the main characters for a new game. There are still a number of things you can do to prepare for the game. Each of the three items below can be a good starting point that helps inform the others. You may like to start with supporting characters. Or, you may want to start with your favorite part of the Old West.

- *Interesting supporting characters*—Create a host of supporting characters. Each should have a Devil. It works best to make the supporting characters related in some way. Relations might be rivalries, kinships, contracts, romances, blood feuds, vendettas, sworn oaths, or many other connections. Just remember that the main characters will become tangled in these relationships. Leave room for them! You need only prepare a couple supporting characters to begin play. But several more can make things more interesting, as well as save a few minutes during the session.

- *A specific time and place*—Choose a time and place for the game. The Western tradition has many interesting backdrops, including cattle trails, the Indian Wars, frontier towns, wagon trails, the prairies, the deserts, the mountains and many more. It is very helpful for players to know where the story takes place, especially as they create a new main character. When in doubt, create a small town, and pick a state. Towns in Texas are a good option for common Western situations, for example.

- *A complicated situation*—You should create at least one situation that will affect the story significantly. Are there some cattle baron's men bullying everyone around, even the sheriff? Or, maybe there's a gunslinger that has everyone on edge? What about rail barons? What about the two families that are killing each over in a dispute? Or is there a gold rush that's driving up prices and spreading corruption and dangerous disagreements? Create some trouble, and then let the players figure out how their main characters fit into the situation. Once play kicks off, keep throwing more trouble their way and let the players figure out how to confront the problems.

  Your favorite Western movies are a great source of inspiration for complicated situations. Grab inspiration from the movies and shows you enjoy—think about what the situation is in each movie. For example, in *Rio Bravo*, the situation is this: A tough sheriff has arrested the brother of the richest, meanest rancher in the area, and the only people he lets to help him protect the jail from inevitable violence are a drunk, an old cripple, an ex-showgirl and a young hotshot. A Dealer could use that situation in a game, and have a supporting character sheriff enlist the misfit troupe of troubled main characters to help him guard his town's jail. See *A Magnificent Seven* on page 43 for some more of this author's favorite Westerns and ideas on how to mine them for inspiration.

With those three things in place, you should be ready to deal a session of Dust Devils. Here's a sample scenario you can use for a game of Dust Devils, or simply as inspiration for you own game plans.

THE LAST TRAIL

The Last Trail is a simple set up for a DUST DEVILS game. Dealers can use the following for a fun single session game, or perhaps add more details for a multiple session game.

A specific time and place: The Last Trail is about the famous cattle drives of the Chisholm Trail. This scenario takes place at the end of the trail, in Abilene, Kansas. The locale is a booming prairie town with stores, saloons, banks, hotels and even a few brothels. The stockyards load thousands of cattle bound for market via railroad. Many main characters make sense here, because people are coming in and out of the town frequently. Cowboys, gamblers, and gunslingers are all good choices, for example.

A complicated situation: Two cattle barons have turned their competition into a violent feud. Each wants to drive the other out of Abilene, and they turn to some unsavory souls (the main characters) to do their dirty work. Cowboys are already tearing each other apart in saloon brawls, and cattle end up "missing." It's bound to get worse. But, the cattle barons don't yet realize that two of their own families have fallen in love.

Supporting characters: With a time, place, and overall conflict in place, now supporting characters take shape. Obviously, this situation requires the two cattle barons. And, to make things more interesting, one cattleman's son and the other cattleman's sister are in love. Finally, some local figures—a saloon owner and the sheriff—round out likely supporting roles for the story.

HARRY MCDOUGAL
Cattle baron

White-haired Harry McDougal has made a fortune with his lands in Texas and his sturdy long-horned cattle going to market via the Chisholm Trail. He has dozens of cowboys in his hire, but he only trusts his son, Jake, with the biggest cattle drives. He's less picky about who he'll hire to rid himself of his prime competitor, John Hobson, and his rival's operation.

Hand: 3 *Traits:* Stubborn as an old goat.
Eye: 4 As shrewd as they come.
Guts: 5 *Past:* Used to be a Confederate officer (1)
Heart: 3 *Present:* Now is a wealthy cattle baron (3)

DEVIL — *Stubbornness (2)*: Harry is rigidly set in his ways, because his ways make money. He has no patience for those who defy his authority.

JOHN HOBSON
Cattle Baron

John Hobson inherited much wealth at an early age from his parents. He took the money and his family West and invested in booming cattle trade where he settled in Abilene, Kansas. Now, he and his sister Delia are influential, respectable figures in the town. But, he's more than willing to risk all that to eliminate his rival, Harry McDougal, once and for all.

Hand: 3 *Traits:* Sneaky as a snake.
Eye: 5 Jealous soul.
Guts: 3 *Past:* Used to be a lawyer (2)
Heart: 4 *Present:* Now is a cattle baron (2)

DEVIL—*Greed* (2): John may be a respectable figure in the town, but he's tasted wealth … and wants more.

JAKE MCDOUGAL
Cowboy foreman

Jake McDougal is a cattleman, but that's about the only trait he shares with his father. Jake was almost born in the saddle, and he loves the open range. But, he's found a new love in Delia Hobson, though father would never approve.

Hand: 4 *Traits:* Tougher than rawhide.
Eye: 3 Loyal as an old mutt.
Guts: 4 *Past:* Used to be a rancher's son (1)
Heart: 2 *Present:* Now is a drover foreman (3)

DEVIL—*Defiant (3)*: Jake's been told what to do all his life, but he's had enough. Now, he doesn't want anyone telling him what to do, no matter what happens.

Delia Hobson

Frontier heiress

Delia Hobson came out West with her brother, John, and their inherited fortune. She finds the frontier liberating, and delights in operating a local weekly newspaper with her share of the family money. Men often find her intimidating, but she's found handsome companionship in Jake McDougal, the son of her brother's rival.

Hand: 3 *Traits:* Pretty as a picture.
Eye: 3 Sassy as a songbird.
Guts: 2 *Past:* Used to be an Eastern lady (2)
Heart: 5 *Present:* Now is a newspaper publisher (2)

Devil—*Know-it-all* (2): Delia doesn't care if you're a man or a woman. She'll knows a hell of a lot more than most folk, anyway, and doesn't mind letting anyone know it.

Arthur "Artie" Winchell

Town marshal

Artie Winchell knows how to handle rough and tumble cowboys—he used to be one himself. Problem is, now he has townsfolk beating down his door to get those cowboys out of sight and off local farmlands. He just can't keep everyone happy. McDougal and Hobson are about to make a whole lot more trouble, so Artie's got his eye on them.

Hand: 4 *Traits:* Angry as a bleeding bear.
Eye: 3 Even-handed.
Guts: 4 *Past:* Used to be cattle driver (1)
Heart: 2 *Present:* Now is a marshal (3)

Devil—*Ill-tempered (2)*: Artie thinks he controls things best when he's angry, and when he's angry there's no telling what he'll do.

Cyrus Riley

Saloon owner

Portly Cy Riley won the town's best-trafficked bar—the Alamo—in a game of cards. He serves hundreds of cowboys, mostly from Texas, and runs a brothel upstairs on the sly. Riley won't admit it, but he'd just as soon see McDougal and Hobson keep the feud going. It's good for business … so far. It's the marshal that's been bad for business, driving all those Texas boys out of town!

Hand: 3 *Traits:* Slippery as an eel.
Eye: 4 Nosy as a coyote.
Guts: 2 *Past:* Used to be a gambling man (2)
Heart: 4 *Present:* Now is a saloon owner (2)

Devil—*Selfish (1)*: Cy Riley looks out only for himself. After all, isn't everyone doing the same thing?

DRIVING

With a specific time and place, a complicated situation, and supporting characters, the Last Trail is ready for a new game. Give it a shot. The Dealer should kick it off with an offer to one of the main characters from one of cattle barons to help rid the trade of his rival (this may inspire a conflict Deal right away). Then, hit another main character with a counter offer from the other cattle baron. But, before anything drastic happens, let the main characters cross paths with Jake McDougal and Delia Hobson, likely at the Alamo saloon.

Alternatively, the Dealer can let the players use these supporting characters as ready-to-go main characters for a quick game.

Once the situation unfolds, the players will begin to take action. Let them do as they wish, but keep the conflicts coming until The End!

Chapter Four

HOW THE WEST WAS WON

PART I: THE LEGEND OF THE WEST

The American West is the most exciting example of Western civilization rising to dominance. Western stories epitomize struggle of lawlessness and violence on the frontier as people sacrifice their safety in the name of order, progress and justice. When a Western hero picks up the gun, he does it because he believes Western civilization and freedom will follow. But, then, it's not always a hero that picks up the gun.

For over a century, Western stories have captivated people. The stories are legend, but rarely historically accurate. DUST DEVILS stems out of that legendary tradition much more so than it any historical fact. This game is more about dealing with creating meaningful stories—like those told in great Western movies—than it is about representing the West with exacting historical detail.

Take *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. The film is a pretty clear cut representation of the good that Western values represent. Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) is an educator. He's morally strong, but physically weak. Eventually, he becomes a highly respectable senator, and one can safely assume he helps usher in modernity on the previously wild and violent frontier. But, how did he get there? The answer is that Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) places him there by killing Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), letting Stoddard earn the credit and heroism. In so doing Doniphon also gives up the woman he loves to Stoddard. Tom Doniphon dies alone, unrecognized for his bravery and action. Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard—and the audience—admire Doniphon for his sacrifice after he dies. Simultaneously, they detest the reckless, lawless violence of Liberty Valance.

If Ransom Stoddard were in DUST DEVILS, his Devil would be *Coward*. He redeems himself of that condition. Tom Doniphon's Devil is *Ego*. His presumption that he'll get the girl destroys him, but he does redeem others.

Americans cherish those redemptive values. Americans believe in law, education, justice, and sacrifice. They don't believe in violent lawlessness, random violence and bullying, which Liberty Valance represents with his bullwhip and big mouth.

But, Westerns are not all desert roses and justice and good guys. For all the wonderful values of modern civilization, all that justice is brewed in the blood of violence and lawlessness. This is what Western stories are all about.

Now, take a look at *The Searchers*. Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) is a man possessed, driven to rescue his niece, Debbie Edwards (Natalie Wood), from the Comanches who captured her, no matter how many get in his way. He'll kill to get Debbie back. And, he does kill.

What's Ethan's Devil? Is it *Revenge*? No. Ethan's Devil is *Racist*. He's a Confederate veteran. He's bothered that his sidekick nephew is a half-breed. He hates Comanches more and more. And, he almost shoots his own niece because she's somehow too Comanche in his eyes, having married their chief, Scar. Yet, Ethan overcomes his hatred this in the end, and takes Debbie home in the closing moments of the movie.

This is what makes Westerns interesting. There is no reason to admire the tales of gunslinging justice alone. It's not all swagger and heroes and riding off into the sunset. If it were, Westerns would get pretty stale. Over time, the best Westerns reminded everyone that there are more interesting stories to tell.

There's plenty of reason to recognize that America has a collective Devil, and the best Westerns point directly at this issue. America and its citizens have to reckon with this violent history, and forget any romantic notion that Gene Autry and Tonto represent the Western. There are far more interesting figures to examine like William Munny and Cheyenne.

America didn't rise up as an enlightened nation with its noble values. The nation carved—in some cases literally—its place out of the frontier and its inhabitants. Americans have spent over a century reckoning

with that, and they've done with the tradition of captivating Western stories. If DUST DEVILS games and stories contribute to that reckoning in some way, that makes this author proud.

A MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

DUST DEVILS is primarily inspired by a several Western films. Here are some of the author's favorite influences and inspirations, including suggestions for how to use ideas from the films in a DUST DEVILS game:

UNFORGIVEN

Directed by Clint Eastwood, 1992

Unforgiven stands as the single greatest inspiration for DUST DEVILS. Clint Eastwood is brilliant as William Munny, a once widely feared murderer and outlaw who has given up his evil ways for a family life. But, he's pathetic at farming. So, he tries one last time to take money for killing rowdy cowboys who cut up a whore. This dark film acknowledges better than any other the troubling but effective role of violence and law in the West. The movie is chilling, brutal, and probably the finest Western ever made.

Steal this idea: Unforgiven isn't the first Western to portray the lawman as a villainous sort, but it's the best. Try a game with the outlaws set against a corrupt sheriff who believes he's doing right by going too far. Then, let the no-good sons of bitches reckon with their own Devils as they confront the lawman!

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

Directed by Sergio Leone, 1968

Second only to *Unforgiven* is Sergio Leone's epic classic *Once Upon a Time in the West*. The film challenged many traditions of the Hollywood Western, and it painted a dark picture of heroes and a darker one of villains. The mysterious protagonist Harmonica (Charles Bronson) haunts the screen on his quest for vengeance against Frank (Henry Fonda). He means business. He even saves the villainous Frank during a gunfight so that he can enact his revenge personally. Frank is among the wickedest villains in any Western. Also great is Cheyenne (Jason Robards), a half-breed desperado who can't shake his outlaw reputation despite his innocence and attempts to help Harmonica. The film is long and carefully paced; it's a marvelous Western.

Steal this idea: Many players would love the chance to play out a revenge tale like Harmonica's. In the movie, it's not really clear until the end why Harmonica wants revenge against Frank. Try that in DUST DEVILS. Let one or more characters set up a backstory of revenge and choose a suitable Devil. But, the Dealer should demand that the cause for revenge will remain unknown until the avenging main character enters The End. It'll be a dramatic moment, and it lets the player tailor the moment to other main characters in the story, perhaps even revealing a new, stronger connection between main characters.

THE SEARCHERS

Directed by John Ford, 1956

Cited by many as the best Western ever made, this John Ford classic is remarkably dark for its time. Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) is a stubborn Confederate veteran who returns to Texas. When Comanches kidnap his niece, he and half-breed nephew Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) set out to find her and bring her back. Their search takes years, and Ethan is driven to violence all along the way. At his climactic confrontation with Debbie Edwards (Natalie Wood), he nearly kills her for being too much like her Indian captors. Few characters inspire the Devil more than Ethan Edwards!

Steal this idea: While a great movie, *The Searchers* portrays Comanches quite poorly. Try a game that gives

them a little more respect—turn the plot around. One player can create a Comanche (or other tribe) warrior main character who enters the white man's world to find his sister or daughter and bring her back home. What might he encounter? Is she at a fort? On a reservation? Is the sister or daughter really captive? Maybe she's married now? Other players can play fellow Comanches, or whites who have some connection to the sister or daughter. Or, one player could make the sister or daughter as his or her main character!

DEAD MAN

Directed by Jim Jarmusch, 1995

Dead Man features William Blake (Johnny Depp) who is mistaken for the famous English artist-poet by Nobody (Gary Farmer), a raving Indian exile. After Blake is shot, but survives, Nobody dubs him a warrior poet avenger, and the two set out on surreal encounters, some disturbing and some bleakly humorous, with strange characters until dead man William Blake is sent to his fate. Dead Man is a great example of how Western stories can break the mold.

Steal this idea: Dead Man can be thought in DUST DEVILS terms as a main character's prolonged delay of The End. Try an alternate rule that allows players to use their Chips help other players delay The End. But, require them to narrate something strange or unusual briefly to explain the delay.

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE

Directed by John Ford, 1962

The movie is told as a flashback memory. Eastern dude (an insulting term in the Old West!) Ransom Stoddard is robbed on the way into town. He learns quickly that nobody will stand up to Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), a nasty outlaw. Only Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) has the guts to take Valance to task. But, to everyone's amazement, the physically weak and untrained Stoddard finally faces Liberty Valance in a clumsy gunfight and wins! The twist is who really killed Valance, and what the quiet, unrecognized hero had to give up to save the day, and it turns out the whole town.

Steal this idea: The story is told as a flashback at Doniphon's modest funeral. Players could try a game starting at a funeral, and then create the story of whose funeral it is, without knowing who's died until they play out the situation!

RIO BRAVO

Directed by Howard Hawks, 1959

Rio Bravo is an answer to Western classic *High Noon*. Sheriff John Chance (John Wayne) jails rowdy Joe Burdette, all while knowing Burdette's wealthy and dangerous brother will try to break him out of jail and kill anyone who gets in the way. Rather than risk the lives of good townsfolk who might help, Chance enlists a drunk, an old cripple, a chatterbox ex-showgirl, and an young aloof cowboy. The film is a fun character portrait as each of these misfits reckons with their own struggles. The climcatic shoot-out is almost an afterthought, and their safety is never really in doubt. But, the play among the cast ranges from humorous to troubling to endearing.

Steal this idea: As mentioned in Chapter Three, *Rio Bravo* is a great set-up for a DUST DEVILS game. The Dealer creates a sheriff, and explains all his details to the playes. Then, the players create misfit main characters who will help him fend off thugs planning a jail break. The jailed character should make an interesting supporting character, too.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Directed by Sergio Leone, 1966

The Man With No Name trilogy culminates in this triangular tale of three gunfighters looking for gold buried in a graveyard. Along with the other so-called Spaghetti Westerns, this film was a sea-change in Hollywood's portrayal of anti-heroes and blurring lines between good guys and bad guys. This is yet another often cited as the best Western film.

Steal this idea: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly is great inspiration for a game in which main characters are set against one another. It's an excellent lesson in how conflicts work among important characters in the story, rather than the frequent portrayal of cooperative "good guys." Try a set up for a three or four player game where each player's main character has a piece of a map and a Devil sure to trigger his rivals own Devils. Or, just require all characters to have the same Devil, like *Greed*!

MORE CLASSICS

Other popular and acclaimed Westerns include:

★★★ *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*
★★★ *Dances With Wolves*
★★★★ *Deadwood* (television series)
★★★ *A Fistful of Dollars*
★★ *For a Few Dollars More*
★★★★★ *High Noon*
★★★ *High Plains Drifter*
★★ *How the West Was Won*
★★★ *Lonesome Dove* (miniseries)
★★★★ *The Magnificent Seven*
★★★★ *Open Range*
★★★★★ *The Outlaw Josey Wales*
★★★ *Pale Rider*
★★★ *Shane*
★★★★ *The Proposition*
★★★ *Tombstone*
★★★★ *The Wild Bunch*

BY THE BOOK

Also influential to the Western story have been a number of authors and stories. Some authors worth checking out are:

★★★★ Zane Grey, particularly his novel *Riders of the Purple Sage*
★★★ Louis Lamour's, particularly his Sacketts series of novels
★★★★★ Cormac McCarthy, many works, notably *Blood Meridien*
★★★★ Larry McMurtry, a number of novels including the popular Lonesome Dove tetralogy: *Dead Man's Walk*, *Commanche Moon*, *Lonesome Dove*, and *Streets of Laredo*.

PART II. THE REAL STORY

Sometimes, the truth about Western legends spoils players' imaginations. Players shouldn't let history ruin their DUST DEVILS fun. Instead, they should let history help inspire better character ideas, richer conflicts, and more dramatic stories. This section is a brief overview of some of the historical events and trends of the American West. Players can research more information online and in books like Dee Brown's accessible *The American West*, Hampton Sides' narrative history *Blood and Thunder,* and many more.

Also, DUST DEVILS games certainly aren't limited to the American West. For example, Mexico, Latin America, and South America, Canada and even Australia all have histories and events comparable to the Old West.

THE PIONEERS

The westward expansion of America, driven by the belief that settling everything west of the Mississippi was obvious, right, and natural. Pioneers and settlers faced hardship and hostility to survive. Most were farmers, raising modest crops and livestock. Winters were cruel. Diseases were common. Settling on lands near Indian tribes occasionally led to trouble, if not killing.

Nearly any DUST DEVILS character that players create would have first-hand experience with life on the frontier, the hardships of the prairie, and the tough choices families faced. How did the character survive dangerous winters? Did he have to kill to survive? Make choices about who lived and died? Resort to cannibalism on the winter trail? The answers are good Devil fodder.

THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War, and particularly its aftermath, probably defined the West more than any other single event. Yet, frequently the war and the Old West occupy different places in people's minds, as though somehow the war was as distant event as two chapters in the history books.

For example, many cowboys from Texas were Confederates, and they mingled—sometimes violently—with Jayhawkers in Kansas at the end of the great cattle drives. Arguments would be common and violence not much less so! Similarly, many former slaves found new work out West, and many others were already there working.

The Civil War affected everyone terribly, and the violence and grief is a good source of inspiration for explaining character Devils. Think about what a main character or supporting character did during the war. Did they participate? For the Union or the Confederacy? What do they think of participants of the other side? Did they lose friends or family? Are they deserters? What about now? Are they looking for a new life out West? Are they running away from the past, maybe even from the army?

There is no end of rich story ideas from the calamitous Civil War. It's a great source of conflict for DUST DEVILS games, and it's an event that begs for reckoning!

SILVER AND GOLD

The lure of silver and gold launched many boomtowns across the West, including Deadwood, South Dakota, long famous in Western lore and now popularly famous due to the HBO television series *Deadwood*. People flocked to towns not only for the promise of the ore, but also of business and high prices in the bustling overnight towns.

Deadwood is a good example of just how troublesome a gold rush could be. The town was notoriously wild. "Wild" Bill Hickok was shot and killed there. But, the area itself was located on the Great Sioux

Reservation, and supposedly off-limits to whites and settlers. Once Colonel George A. Custer reported discovering gold, however, eager prospectors violated the treaty. This sparked war between whites and the Sioux, and General Custer and his 7th Cavalry met an ugly end overwhelmed by Sioux.

Players can borrow a lot from such wild activity. Greed fueled much of the problem as people competed for land, mine claims, gold, and the businesses surrounding the mining trade. Whole DUST DEVILS games could be set in a wild mining town, with double-dealing business transactions by day and high stakes card games and cavorting by night!

INDIAN WARS

Violent and deadly confrontation between whites and various Indian tribes occurred throughout the history of the American West, and in fact preceded westward expansion. Popular portrayals in early Western films of Indians as "bad guys" fail to explain the ugly truth about this period in American history. The truth is that the United States forcibly moved tribes further and further westward into smaller and smaller reserves, and the result was frequently violent conflict now known as the Indian Wars.

In addition to confining tribes to unsettled or then-undesirable lands, the U.S. and its agents also frequently devastated the tribes' resources, including destroying buffalo and wild horses. The effect was starving out and weakening Indians to the point of surrender. U.S. agents also frequently and flagrantly violated previously brokered treaties between tribes and the U.S.

Tribes that participated in some of more famous confrontations include:

- Sioux and Cheyenne in the Plains, near south Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. Famous leaders included Red Cloud, then later Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.
- Navajo in the Southwest, near the Rio Grande valley.
- Apache in the Southwest, including famous warrior leaders Cochise and Geronimo.
- Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma territory and Texas. The Red River War pitted cattlemen against hunters of the Indian Territory (Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle) who hunted the whites' longhorn cattle. The war involved famous Comanche chief Quanah Parker.
- Nez Perce in Idaho and Montana, including leader Chief Joseph.

Almost all confrontations involved the U.S. and its settlers encroaching on Indian lands, and the tribes defending their domains, often futilely. Tribes and leaders also fled in migrations across U.S. borders to Canada and Mexico.

The Wounded Knee massacre, where U.S. soldiers killed more than150 Lakota Sioux, signaled the end of the Indian Wars in 1890. It was not the only massacre over the course of the conflicts.

The clash of civilizations between the United States and the Indian tribes was a complex situation. Indians reacted sometimes violently, sometimes peaceably, as did whites.

Dust Devils players might portray supporting or main character Indians or half-breeds, who did take part in Western history. Or, they might have Devils tied to the events of the Indian Wars, like participating in a massacre, capturing a desperate chief, or vendettas against Indian abductors.

LAW & ORDER

Law enforcement in the West varied widely with states and territories. Some communities had no local law enforcement, relying instead on the U.S. military or even federal marshals. Such communities sometimes took it upon themselves to punish criminals or suspected criminals with vigilante justice. Crimes included cattle and horse rustling, which many considered serious crimes. Rustlers were occasionally hanged for their offenses, but the frequency has probably been exaggerated by film and fiction.

Sheriff was a title usually granted by county, with deputies serving sheriffs. The title town marshal, or just marshal, was a kind of police chief for towns and communities. Their duties were similar to sheriffs. Federal marshals, or U.S. marshals, served larger areas and would have to travel frequently. Some small towns also employed constables to keep order. Law enforcement was as varied as the lawmen themselves. Some bent and broke rules, others were strict. Some used serious violence, and others had no need.

The rule of law and the role of violence is one of the key themes of Dust Devils. Games frequently feature a sheriff or marshal as either a main character or supporting character. Either way, lawmen characters have to walk the line between law and violence and between justice and revenge. Are those characters willing to kill to keep order? Or, are other characters willing to defy the law to do what they think is right or get what they want? Law and the gun are obvious and important things to consider for a game.

GUNFIGHTERS & OUTLAWS

Next to the cowboy, the most famous Western legend is the gunfighter, a six-gun toting man with a cool hand and keen eye. Gunfighters did exist for a short period, though their reputations and notoriety probably outweighed their actual skills and accomplishments. There is little distinction between gunfighter and outlaw, though some famous figures earned their reputations as official lawmen.

One of the most remarkable figures, who certainly was an outlaw, was John Wesley Hardin. Hardin did kill several people, but he also falsely claimed to have killed many more. There is some indication his victims were blacks or Reconstruction advocates, which he no doubt viewed angrily as damn Yankees. Like many famous gunfighters and outlaws, Hardin met death at the end of a gun. He was shot and killed in a Texas saloon. Other famous gunfighter and outlaw figures who died violently include Jesse James, William Bonney, a.k.a Billy the Kid, and "Wild" Bill Hickok.

Players can take that lesson to heart in playing Dust Devils. It's clear that many gunfight victors later met their demise in shootouts and ambushes, often the result of vendettas. One can't outpace the Devil!

RAILROADS

The railroads were a remarkable achievement that connected the East and West and made westward expansion possible. But, progress had a price, and the owners of those railroads were usually the ones cashing in on that price. Farmers protested freight rates for their commodities. They paid more and more for goods while receiving less and less for their crops. Towns with rail routes thrived while those without perished.

Dust Devils players might create hired guns working for the rail barons, or farmers and townsfolk dealing with the railroads. Are they willing to terrorize or kill for profit? Or, what can they do against the rich rail barons? What will happen to their towns? The role of the railroad can inform many interesting situations and inspire Devils for any Dust Devils game.

CATTLE TRAILS

The great cattle drives inspire the classic cowboys and much of the imagery of the Old West. The most famous route was the Chisholm Trail, which went from Texas to Kansas by way of Indian Territory in Oklahoma. The key was reaching railways which shipped the cattle to markets in more populous areas. Moving cattle was hard, dangerous work.

Drives moved cattle—including sometimes wild or stray cattle rounded up and herded to market—through Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, the Dakotas and Missouri, which was closest to bigger markets.

Cowboys (also called drovers, cowmen, cow pokes, or cow punchers) were a diverse lot, and included many blacks and Mexican vaqueros, who originated the tradition. Many Texas cowboys were at the very least sympathetic to the Confederate cause, and viewed Yankees with suspicion. In turn, many Kansans didn't care for the Texan cowboys in their towns or grazing cattle on their farmlands. Kansans also resented that Texas cattle infested with ticks brought Texas Fever that damaged local stock more than the hardy longhorns. Feuds, fistfights and even firefights resulted when cowboys clashed with locals or each other.

Players can rustle conflict easily out of the cattle drives. Cowboy characters, for example, might turn to the roaming drover lifestyle to escape the Devil. Or, conflict on the trail or at its end in Kansas might invoke some past Devil. See the sample scenario *The Last Trail* on page 49 for more ideas to use cattle drives in Dust Devils sessions.

THE LAST COWBOYS

In the booming years after the Civil War cowboys drove cattle by the thousands on the now famous trails, but as new farmers and settlers settled the wilderness the cowboys began to dwindle. The open range gave way to barbed wire and privately owned pastures. The situation is ripe for conflict with farmers defending their land, cowboys defending their way of life, and technology edging out demand for their work.

Appendix

BEYOND THE WEST

In this section, the DUST DEVILS rules break out of the Old West and leap into action in other exciting genres, including espionage action, samurai drama, and modern crime noir.

DEATHWISH

Explore the murky world of espionage and covert action in this special. Portray agents balancing personal desires with professional loyalties.

Page 51

RONIN

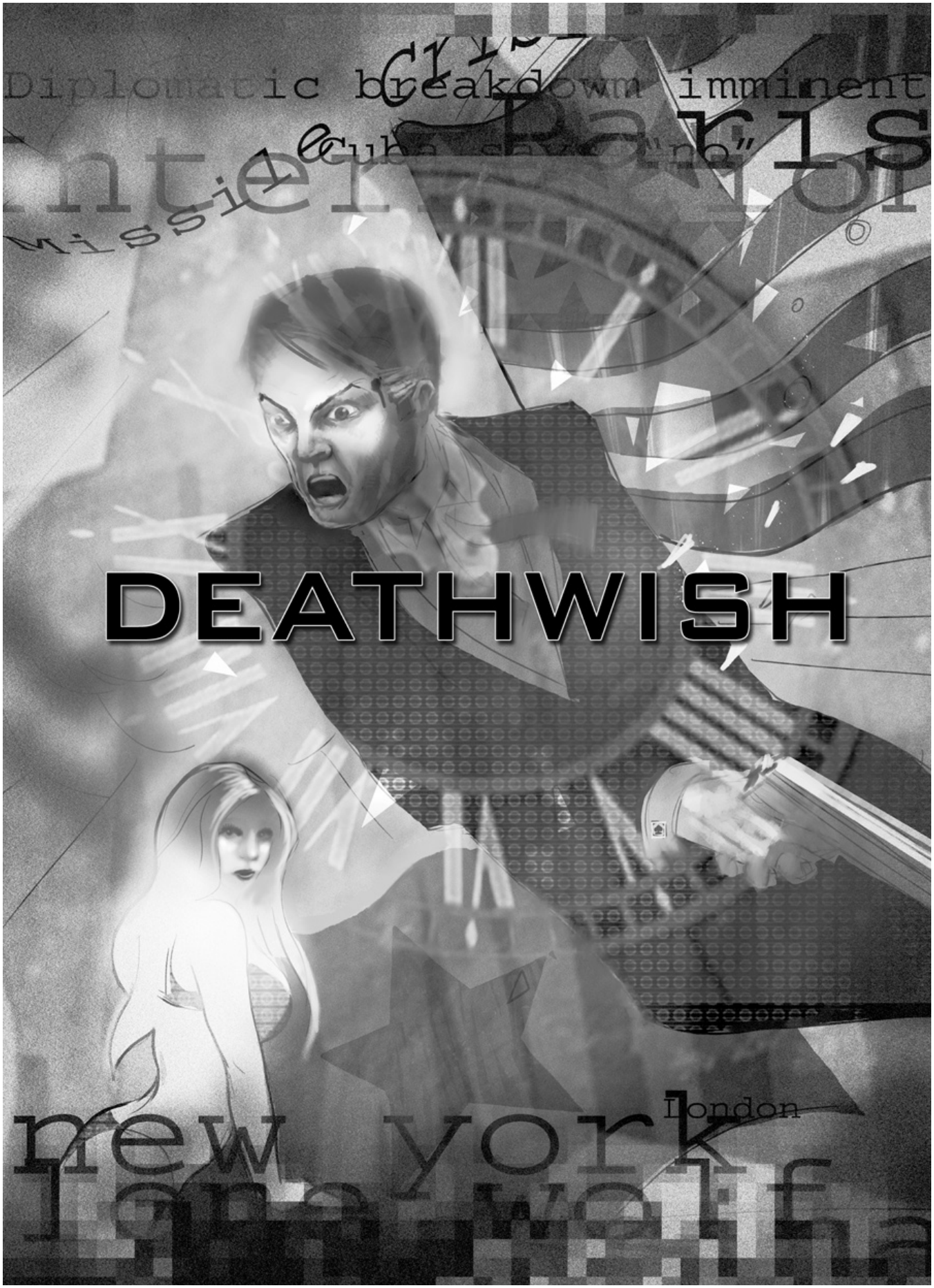
Ronin samurai
Honor without a master
One duty remains

Page 58

CONCRETE ANGELS

Life on the streets is tough. Get down to the zero, the darkest place of the human soul in a gritty modern crime drama where the bad guys sometimes do the right thing.

Page 62


Diplomatic breakdown imminent
Paris
London
new york
DEATHWISH

PRELIMINARY BRIEFING

Deathwish is a game of espionage in the tradition of Ian Fleming's famous character James Bond and many other spy thrillers and dramas popular in movies and novels. Players portray super spies, secret agents and even devious masterminds who carry out morally murky spying and dangerous covert operations.

Deathwish focuses on a crucial character-centric issue. In Dust Devils, that issue is the Devil — will your character *shoot or give up the gun*? That is, will the Devil lead him to a life of violence and infamy, or will he be redeemed?

Deathwish emphasizes a slightly different theme. Here, the issue is "Are you loyal enough to risk death?" Contrary to the James Bond film title, spies do not only live twice. Espionage and covert action are dangerous affairs. Deathwish examines how far an agent is willing to go to risk his own safety for some greater cause. Deathwish provides a mechanic for that ultimate moment—when the agent must choose between his mission and his life.

CHARACTER DOSSIERS

AGENT SCORES

Deathwish defines characters with four Scores that differ slightly from the four Scores presented in Dust Devils. Attribute ratings cannot exceed 5. Players assign 13 points among their agents' four Scores. Those Scores are:

- ♠ **Aim**—Aim measures a character's hand-eye coordination. In fact, it represents most any physical task an agent might attempt. If a task requires any amount of physical skill—whether piloting a helicopter or actually aiming a weapon—Aim is the Score to use. Aim replaces the Hand Score in Dust Devils, and it therefore is associated with the Spades suit.
- ♦ **Wits**—Wits is the agent's ability to react to his surroundings and notice details and things out of the ordinary, a crucial element of espionage and covert work. It is a measure of a character's insight and intelligence, as well as his or her cunning. Wits replaces the Eye Score in Dust Devils, and it therefore is associated with the Diamonds suit.
- ♣ **Guts**—Guts represents both a character's health and fortitude as well as his courage and boldness. Agents might employ Guts to sneak into an embassy in broad daylight or to steer a speedboat off a waterfall! If a situation requires a lot of nerve, Guts is the Score to use. Just as in Dust Devils, the Guts Score is associated with the Clubs suit.
- ♥ **Cool**—Simply put, Cool is an agent's style. Cool determines how suavely the character gambles in a Monaco casino, or even how level-headed and in-control he remains when the bullets are flying. Cool replaces the Heart Score in Dust Devils, and it is therefore associated with the Hearts suit.

These Scores are mechanically identical to Dust Devils Scores. In each conflict, the player explains how his main character will approach his goal. Then, the Dealer chooses two relevant Scores for the situation. The player then receives a number of cards equal to the sum of those two Scores. Note that Harm may reduce attribute ratings, and therefore reduce the number of cards a player receives in the Deal.

AGENT SPECIALTIES

Agent specialties replace Dust Devils' Past and Present. Specialties are skills and proficiencies an agent employs in the field. These might include: Small Arms, Negotiation, Piloting, Surveillance, Interrogation, Infiltration, Cryptography, Counter Intelligence, and so on. Players are encouraged to define their own Specialties for their agents, with approval from the Dealer.

Each player must assign a Primary Specialty and a Secondary Specialty for his character. The Primary Specialty always has a rating of 3. The Secondary Specialty always has a rating of 1.

Mechanically, specialties work exactly like Past and Present. A player may discard and draw back a number of cards from his hand equal to his character's Specialty rating. Players may employ only one Specialty in a single conflict.

AGENT LOYALTIES

Deathwish characters do not have Traits. Instead, they are defined by relationships and loyalties they have with people, organizations, or even mroe abstract things like nations or ideologies.

Each character has two loyalties. These are two strong connections the character has with another person or another group.

When a character acts in support of his loyalties, he receives an additional card. However, when a character betrays his loyalties in some way, he instead receives 1 chip. The Dealer has ultimate authority to decide whethter a character supports or betrays his loyalties.

CLASSIFIED

EXAMPLE DEATHWISHES

Here are several example Deathwishes. Players can use these directly, or as inspiration for their own Deathwish ideas.

LONE WOLF

The agent's family was killed (by government body, terrorist cell, etc.) because he was unable or unwilling to help them. Now, the agent has nothing—or no one—to live for. Worse, he doesn't trust himself to connect with others. He might receive extra cards based on his Deathwish rating in conflicts where he acts alone, or fewer in conflicts where he must rely on someone else.

PATRIOT

The agent is so loyal to his agency or country that he puts his life on his line to do his duty. He might receive bonus cards when putting his duties above his own safety (or the safety of others), but he might lose cards when he's acting for personal reasons, rather than political or ideological ones.

DAREDEVIL

The agent is an adrenaline junky willing to do anything it takes to do his work—and usually as over-the-top as he can. He might receive extra cards when pushing the limits of action, but lose cards when he plays things safely or quietly.

ASSASSIN

The agent is a killing machine. Willingly or not, he been trained to be a perfect killer, and it's the only life he really knows. When he uses deadly violence against others, he'll receive bonus cards for this Deathwish. But, when he tries to peaceably solve problems, he might lose cards.

WRENEGADE

The agent is rogue, an former agency man with a cause of his own. Now his old agency is after him. Define the agent's cause. When he pursues that cause without the aid or backing of others, he earns bonus cards. But, when he falls back on the help of other contacts, he loses cards as a penalty.

Players may use both loyalties in a single conflict. For example, an agent might support one loyalty while betraying another.

Example loyalties might include: A lover, a friend, family members, government agencies, one's homeland, a political cause like Communism, a handler (a spy boss), or a religious ideology like Islam.

DEATHWISH

The central agent characteristic is the Deathwish. Much like the Devil mechanic in Dust Devils, a character's Deathwish defines the agent's main struggle in the story. It is the thing he's willing to die for. The Deathwish might represent the extreme dedication he devotes to his missions. Or, the Deathwish could be some dreadful mission he had to perform, one that now has grave consequences. Or, it might represent how he feels betrayed by the agency he once worked for.

In all cases, Deathwish works identically the Devil mechanic in Dust Devils. In conflict situations that are significantly relevant to a character's Deathwish, the character may receive extra cards in the deal equal to the current Deathwish rating. Or, in other situations the player may lose cards in the deal equal to the Deathwish rating and gain 1 chip.

Players should set their agents' Deathwish rating from 1 to 3 at the start of each session. This rating determines the number of bonus or penalty cards the a player earns in the deal when the Deathwish is involved in the conflict. For more rules information, see *Devil* (page 9 & 17) and *The End* (page 21).

For some Deathwish ideas for your agent, see Example Deathwishes on page 54.

Remember, a Deathwish should always be about the character. It should be some flaw or quirk about the agent. A Deathwish should never be about issues outside the character. For example, an innocent man who is *Marked for Death* by the KGB isn't really a good Deathwish because there is nothing for the innocent man to reckon with. He merely wants to survive, and he has no personal issue to resolve.

IN THE FIELD

The Deathwish game rules are very much the same as Dust Devils. This includes the Deal, stud hand rules for hazards, the Draw, the Call, folding, high-card narration, and chips and stakes mechanics. Refer to *Chapter Two: The Laws of the West* and *Chapter Three: Reach for It* for details.

HARM

Deathwish does urge one significant change in Difficulty rules as presented in Dust Devils. As an *optional* rule more suitable for over-the-top spy thriller action (as opposed to gritty spy "realism," in which case it is recommended that you use the original Harm rules from Dust Devils), you may wish to tone down the permanence of Harm.

Here's how it works: When agents are involved in a conflict, Harm is resolved normally. The Harm reduces character Scores as the narrator describes the conflict. However, once the conflict is resolved, all Scores affected *but not at 0* are restored to their original ratings for the next conflict or scene. Scores reduced to 0 remain so permanently, and The End for that character occurs when he next uses that Score in a Deal.

The only exception to automatically restored Harm are conflicts that continue the action. For example, "after" a firefight, players may decide to deal another hand immediately to continue the firefight. In this case, the Scores do not recover until the sequential conflict at large is resolved.

As an additional *optional* rule: All Harm is permanent (meaning that it works like the normal Dust Devils Harm rules) when the Harm is delivered by a character whose Deathwish was active in the conflict.

For example, Agent Summers has just lost a conflict involving his Soviet rival, Ms. Gradenko. Ms. Gradenko is has the Deathwish *Assassin*. Therefore, the Harm inflicted upon Summers is permanent, even though none of his Scores are at 0. His Scores won't revert to their original rating for the next conflict. Note that Agent Summers may recover some Score ratings; see *recovery* (page 24) and Redmeption (page 26), both part of the *Spending Chips* section.

THE DEALER

In Deathwish, the Dealer is responsible for guiding players through the story created during the game. The job is not so much to present missions with specific aims and goals, but rather to present characters and situations riddled with conflicts and let the players decisions shape the course of the mission. The Director, then, should react to the actions and decisions of the agents.

As Dealer, the crucial job is to keep play focused on issues and conflicts related to the agents' various Deathwishes. This game is far less about disarming the super-weapon, and much more about what it takes for a spy to sort out his personal issues as they conflict with his professional issues.

Therefore, as Director, you should be less concerned about the intricate details of a super-secret crime organization or the details of Soviet equipment and the KGB. Be more concerned about providing situations that let the players really push the limits of their agents via the Deathwish mechanic. Force them to make terrible choices between relationships—perhaps a lover or a family member–and their duty or their cause, enforced by secret agencies or ideology.

For more information on running the game, see the *Dealer Advice* section on page 31.

TRY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!

Players will have fun creating teams of agents. Consider the *Mission: Impossible* team as a model for such a group. However, Deathwish can also work well even when players are pitted against one another. In this case, separate players might play CIA and KGB operatives. Or, one or more players might opt to create an evil mastermind and his colorful henchmen, while other players take on the roles of secret agents out to foil their plans.

Should your group take this approach, the only caveat is for everyone to understand that the game is not a competition. Rather, it is more akin to everyone taking part in making an exciting movie. The members of your group should be mature enough to know that everyone's working together to craft a great spy thriller, not working against one another to "kill the other guy." It's not about winning and losing, in this case. It's about enjoying the whole narrative and exploring the Deathwish theme as a group.

THE BRIEFCASE

Here is a suggestion for a very simple situation that you might introduce to start Deathwish play. This situation presents a simple conundrum for operatives, and it can easily be adopted for a group working together or for a group with agents from divergent agencies or organizations.

The mission is simple: The agents must retrieve a certain briefcase (even if they're on "opposing" sides). Of course, it won't be that easy. Other agencies will be after the package, and rogue agents or elements might acquire it to try to sell to the highest bidder. With only this simple conflict, and perhaps a specific locale like Paris or Hong Kong, the Dealer and players should have more than enough to launch right into play.

The interesting element, particularly from the Dealer's perspective, is that this situation does not specify what's in the briefcase from the onset. The director may have an idea, but he should be willing to adapt that idea based on game-play as players come up with suggestions and narrations that hint as to its contents. The Dealer might even explain to the players that the contents of the briefcase are unknown, and they can help define what those contents are, especially by narrating events during conflicts. Possible briefcase contents might include: super-weapon components; troop deployments, spy-plane blueprints; biological weapons; African conflict diamonds; secret agent identities; or even nothing! Possible briefcase owners (at the beginning of the mission) might include: Soviet defectors; double-agents; terrorists; unknown secret agents from the players' own agency; an but innocent woman; henchmen of a criminal mastermind; or even perhaps the agents themselves, who are unable to open the case before enemies intervene. It might even be cuffed to one agent's arm!

Keep adversity coming at the players as they try to retrieve the case safely. Or, their mission might change if they realize that their handlers want the case for diabolical purposes—perhaps they decide *not* to give the case to their masters.

MISSION DEBRIEFING

The Deathwish rules presented here alter some components of Dust Devils. However, unless these rules specifically indicate a change, players should defer to the Dust Devils rules explained in this book.

These are your orders. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to have a lot of fun. Fortunately, this message will not self destruct. In fact, if you have questions, visit http://www.chimera.info.

CLASSIFIED

NEED-TO-KNOW INTEL

Here are a number of inspring movies, TV shows, and novels:

LICENSE TO KILL

James Bond films, especially:

- Casino Royale
- Dr. No
- From Russia With Love
- Goldeneye

SPY THRILLERS

- 24 (television show)
- The Bourne Identity
- Mission: Impossible
- The Sandbaggers (television show)
- Spooks / MI-5 (television show)
- Ronin

SPY ROMANCE

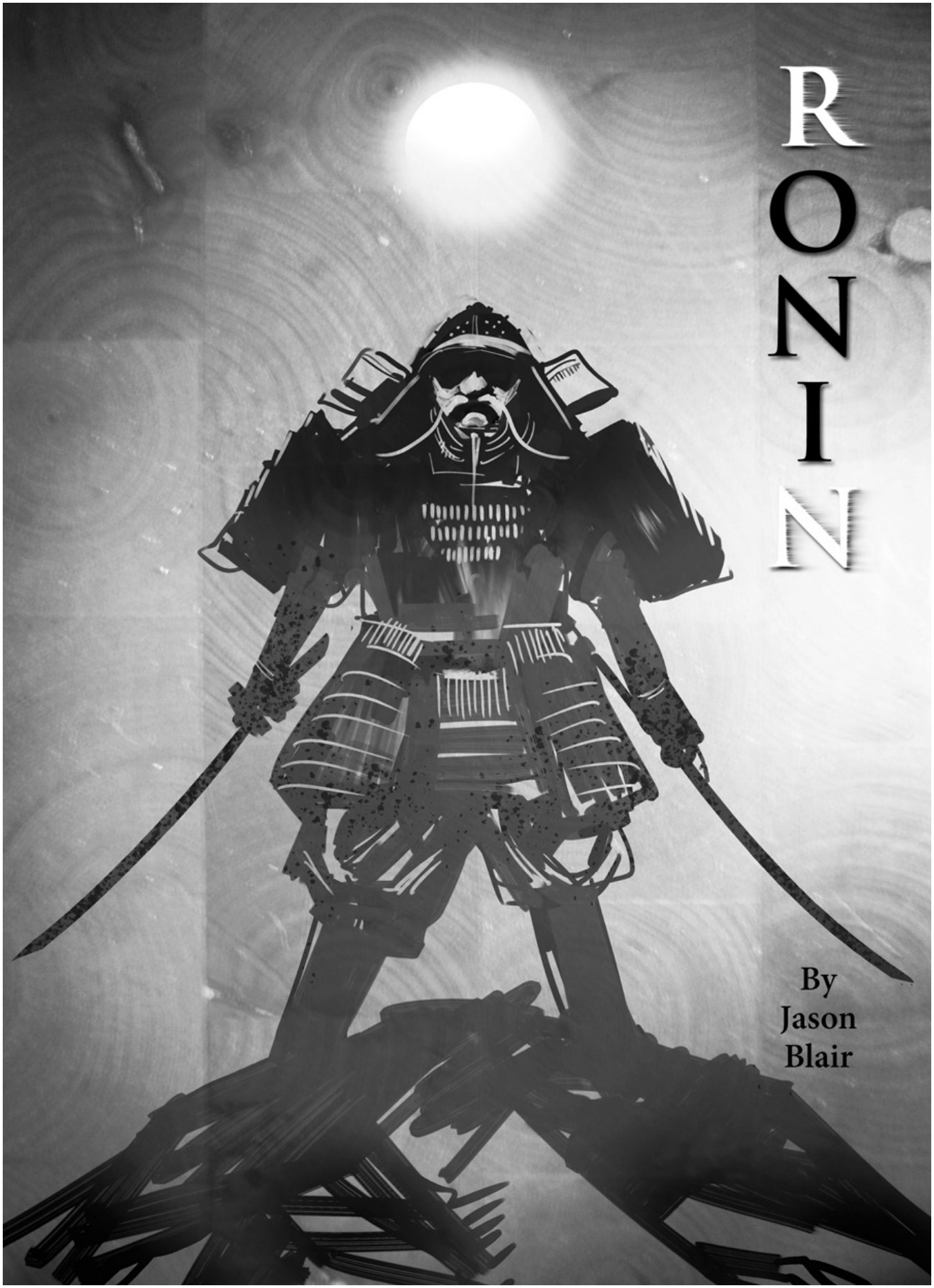
- The Constant Gardner
- The Russia House
- Spy Game

NOVELS

- *Cardinal of the Kremlin*, by Tom Clancy
- *The Hunt for Red October*, by Tom Clancy
- *Patriot Games*, by Tom Clancy
- *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, by John le Carré
- *A Perfect Spy*, by John le Carré

GAMES

- *Spione*, by Ron Edwards



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You cannot tell whether a person is good or bad by his vicissitudes in life. Good and bad fortune are matters of fate. Good and bad actions are Man's Way. Retribution of good and evil is taught simply as a moral lesson.

—Yamamoto Tsunetomo, **Hagakure**

Where Dust Devils is a take on the gritty Old West of film and folklore, RONIN is set in a feudal Japan that reinterprets Dust Devils' core theme. Instead of a Devil that the characters must eventually face, the characters in RONIN are serving out a Duty to someone—or something—else.

Some examples of this can be found in Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (and most of Kurosawa's films, actually, as duty was one of the director's central themes). In *Seven Samurai* in particular, however, each samurai takes the task of protecting the village for a different reason.

Keep this in mind when creating a RONIN character: Even though duties may be similar, motives rarely are. RONIN assumes the reader has a basic knowledge of feudal Japanese history, society, and belief. There are many wonderful books, films, and games that supply an in-depth look at the day-to-day life and workings of feudal Japan and the recitation of such information is out of the scope of this supplement. As recommendations, however, I suggest Gold Rush Games' *Sengoku*, Alderac Entertainment's *Legend of the Five Rings* (a good resource for the implementation of mythology into a feudal setting), and the aforementioned films of Akira Kurosawa. There are countless other resources that cover the historical, mythological, martial, and social aspects of the feudal era, and you are encouraged to study them. But, as with most great works, do not feel obligated to be a slave to the facts. Whatever works dramatically is what's important here.

CHARACTERS

The characters in RONIN are all *bushi*, warriors trained in the art of bushido (a discipline usually reserved for those of the samurai caste). These warriors are burdened by an obligation they must honor—*or die trying*. These characters may be noble or ignoble, honorable or dishonorable, blessed by the fortunes or cursed, but these warriors will serve as the protagonists of tales that will unfold. So, above all else, they must be *interesting*. They should be motivated, active, and driven. They should not be passive, non-committal, and lazy. RONIN, in its heart, is about conflict both internal and external, and characters who do not respond to dramatic stimuli are not good characters for this setting.

HISTORY

The first thing you should do is write up a brief summary of the character's history. This should allude to (if not outright state) aspects of the character that are detailed in their Honor, Spirit, and Duty. A short paragraph or two is sufficient. Included in this write-up should be your character's name, familial house, and anything important that is not covered mechanically. What should not be in this history are dramatic dead ends. Your character's history should bring out more controversy than it resolves.

Elements

RONIN characters eschew the standard Dust Devils attributes in favor of elements. The point allotments and rules from Dust Devils remain the same.

- ♠ Water represents the character's martial and strategic ability. This includes the use of any and all weapons. Most RONIN characters disassociate themselves from combat, emotionally, so this will be used most of the time. However, if they are fighting to protect something they love or are driven to fight by some other aggressive cause, Fire should be used. Water is associated with Spades.
- ♦ Wind represents the character's intellectual nature. It is the character's intelligence, wit, and charisma. Wind is associated with Diamonds.
- ♣ Earth represents the physical nature of the character. This is the character's brawn, strength, and endurance. Whenever a character needs to do something physical (save combat), use Earth. Earth is associated with the suit of Clubs.
- ♥ Fire represents the character's passion and aggression. Whenever something the character truly cares about is put into play, Fire is used. It is quite common for one's Fire and Duty to be linked. Fire is associated with the suit of Hearts.

HONOR & SPIRIT

Instead of picking two traits, RONIN players choose a descriptor that details their characters' Honor and another that evokes their characters' Spirit. One's Honor describes the character's standing in feudal society whereas their Spirit details their general demeanor. Try to write these descriptors in a style that captures the feel of the RONIN setting. Mechanically, these function the same as Traits in Dust Devils.

TALENTS

Talents are the similar to Past and Present in Dust Devils. All RONIN characters have the talent *Bushi,* which is the training given to bushi and is also the code by which they live. This talent covers how to properly handle, use, and maintain their daisho (the pairing of the katana and wakizashi), as well as other military matters, heraldry and so on.

In addition, each RONIN character chooses one other talent. This is another profession or lifestyle that the RONIN character knows. Possible talents might include: Assassin, Bandit, Beggar, Courtier, Drunkard, Horseman, Magistrate, Monk, Poet, or Thief.

Assign four points between the Bushi talent and the other talent.

During conflicts where *one* of a character's talents is relevant, a player can discard a number of cards up to his character's Talent rating and draw an equal number of new cards. For example, during a sword duel, a player could use his character's Bushi talent to draw cards. See *The Draw* on page 18 for details.

DUTY

This is the most important thematic aspect of a RONIN character. This is what will drive the character forward in the narrative. The character's Duty may be to protect and train a child, honor the spirit of a fallen family member, find an ancient ancestral weapon, or anything that will push the character into dramatic situations and add meat to the story. Duties can be sworn to a house, a daimyo, a lover, a teacher, one's self, or anybody (or anything). Duties can be sworn *against* someone else, as well.

One's Duty should be written as a short letter to whoever the Duty was sworn. The same rules as the Devil are used for Duty.

SAMPLE RONIN

Included below are two sample RONIN characters to give you an idea of what the end result looks like.

Masagume Hiroshi

History—Masagume Hiroshi is a samurai from the house Ogani. Nahu, the daimyo's nephew, framed Hiroshi for the murder of the daimyo's favorite geisha. The daimyo knew Hiroshi was not to blame and chose not to execute the bushi. However, he could not sentence the true culprit, so he opted to banish Hiroshi. Stripped of his heritage, Hiroshi travels the countryside, longing for the day when he shall reap vengeance.

Water: 3 *Honor:* Cast from the waters of my father.
Wind: 3 *Spirit:* Once calm, my soul now rages.
Earth: 2 *Talents:* Bushi (1)
Fire: 5 Hunter (3)

Duty (2)
Masimo Nahu,

Your treachery shall be exposed in the face of your father and the mark of your house. Your skin shall sheathe my steel; your blood shall feed my children's children. Make peace with the spirits, for your time is short.

Gokuroji Unashi, or Roji the Damned

History—Rokusabura Unashi was raised under the tutelage of the famed warrior Gokuroji Kenichi, more commonly known as Roji the Wanderer or Roji the Penniless. Roji taught Unashi everything he knew, and Unashi excelled in his training. However, a few months after Unashi's thirteenth birthday, Roji fell ill, and the fortunes took him from the world. Before he went, however, Roji told Unashi of the boy's true heritage. Unashi was one of five children; all of whom had been spread from one shore to the other. The fortunes, Unashi was told, predicted that great turmoil would result should the children ever band together. Unashi and his siblings, it seems, have become a bit of folklore amongst the superstitious. That is why, Roji told his student, Unashi was brought out to the fringes. That is also why, Roji smiled, he taught his charge so well. Unashi, not caring what the fortunes foresaw or what the commoners think, has set out to find his siblings. Taking his teacher's name, and wearing his curse with pride, Unashi wanders in search of his brothers and sisters.

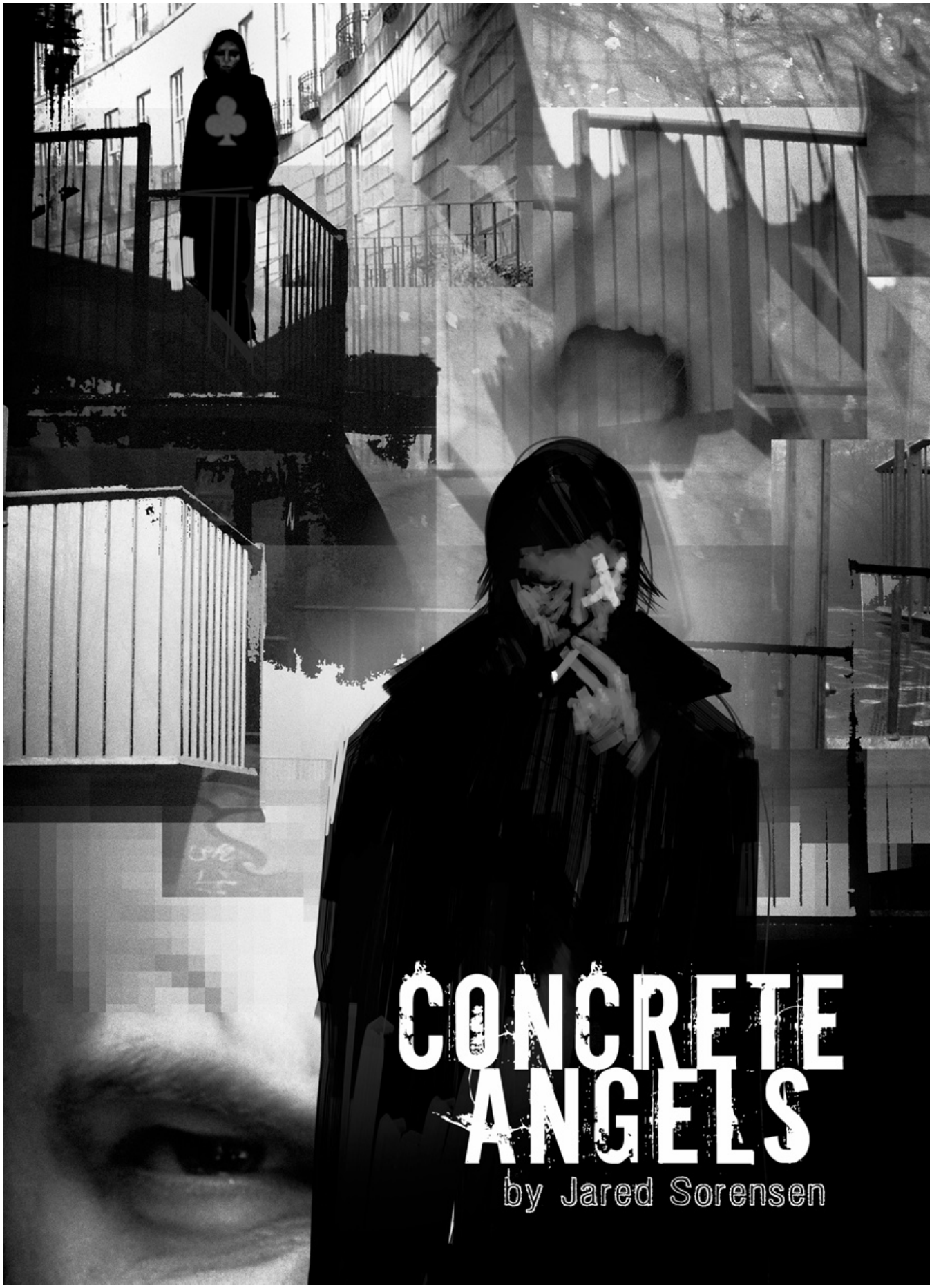
Water: 3 *Honor:* Feared by my pursuers, revered by my victims.
Wind: 2 *Spirit:* The mightiest storm is preceded by the greatest calm.
Earth: 4 *Talents:* Bushi (3)
Fire: 4 Storyteller (1)

Duty (1)

My dearest siblings, I do not know if you are aware of the truth, nor do I know where you reside. But I have sworn to the spirit of our mother and father, and my teacher Roji, that I will reunite us. Let not prejudice or superstition keep us apart.

RUNNING RONIN

RONIN tales can scale from bloody revenge fantasies to epic passion plays to anything in between. The history and mythology of feudal Japan is rich with political and familial intrigue, betrayal, forbidden love, brave warriors cast out, and long-lost sons finding their way home. These hooks should not be confined to the history of the character but should come up during play as well. A game of non-stop duels will get old after awhile (not to mention fatal). The sword is often the last tool with which the characters will want to negotiate. The mystery of feudal Japan has a lot to offer the players, so treat it well.



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DOWN IN THE ZERO

Concrete Angels is set in the grimy, gritty world of crime fiction, especially like Andrew Vachss' "Burke" series of novels and Frank Miller's *Sin City*. The City is a dark and dirty place where crime runs rampant. Hookers and junkies lurk in the alleys like rats, the Mob runs City Hall and the cops are either corrupt or burned-out. The characters are con men, pushers, thieves, call girls and hustlers. But being on the wrong side of the law doesn't make you a bad guy. It just makes you more careful.

Like Dust Devils, this game focuses on an important facet of your character's personality. In Dust Devils, that issue is the Devil—*shoot or give up the gun?* In other words, can a man change his ways and live a better live or is that man doomed to a short life and a tragic end?

In this game, the Zero replaces the Devil. Author, attorney and child welfare advocate Andrew Vachss uses the term "The Zero" to describe the darkest places of the human heart and mind (in fact, one of his novels is titled *Down in the Zero*). The City isn't just a concrete jungle; it's a subterranean nightmare of human filth and depravity. The Devil pales in comparison to The Zero, a place of eternal darkness where a person's soul, life and light can be snuffed out like a candle flame. The Zero lives to consume … and it's always hungry for more.

In Concrete Angels, the central premise is, *can a bad man do the right thing when it counts?* When you're hip-deep in human trash, it can be hard to stay clean … some of that shit is bound to stick. When the only thing left is hope, is that enough? Or as Vachss himself has said, "You don't use an angel for a guide on a tour to hell."

RULES OF THE STREET

Concrete Angels is a variation on the Dust Devils rules and backdrop. This game follows the rules of Dust Devils, but with several alterations and exceptions explained here. Unless otherwise explained here, players should follow the Dust Devils rules.

RAP SHEETS

Concrete Angels defines characters with four Scores that differ slightly from those presented in Dust Devils. Those Scores are:

♠ **Trade**—A measure of the character's manual dexterity and mechanical ability. Spades are used for doing any kind of technical task, like hot-wiring a car, rigging a trap or picking a lock.
Mnemonic: "Trade" rhymes with "spade," and spades are tools of a grave-digger's trade.

♦ **Resources**—Represents the character's ability to procure *things*, be they material (like guns or cash) or intangible (like information). Diamonds are used whenever you wish to fence goods, bribe a cop or locate information.
Mnemonic: Diamonds are valuable resources.

♣ **Violence**—There is no strength attribute in Concrete Angels, nor is there a measure of accuracy or agility. The only thing that matters a character's capacity for violence. Violence is an amalgamation of physical fitness, wits and the sheer determination necessary to put a bullet in someone's head or a knife in someone's back. Clubs are used for committing acts of violence, be they with knives, guns or fists.
Mnemonic: Clubs are weapons used to commit violent acts.

♥ **Emotion**—A combination of guile, empathy and presence, used to sway the emotions of other people (for good or evil). Hearts are used for emotional tasks, like discerning truth from lies, resisting seduction or persuading someone to help you.
Mnemonic: Emotion is symbolized by a Heart.

Note: Someone with high Violence and low Emotion has the potential to be a sociopath (like the character Wesley from the Burke novels). This type of individual is best avoided as a player character in Concrete Angels. They do make excellent supporting characters, however.

These Scores work much like those in Dust Devils with a few exceptions.

- First of all, players have twenty-four points to distribute among these four Scores.
- Scores have a minimum of three and a maximum rating of 10.
- Lastly, players do not combine Scores when a conflict arises. Instead, the player chooses a single Score and receives that many cards.

You may notice that using this system, there are no Scores appropriate for arm wrestling, picking pockets or driving cars, nor is there a way to gauge a character's perceptiveness. Scenes that incorporate these elements do so to set up future conflicts. The Dealer is encouraged to rule by fiat in these cases (wily players can spend poker chips to overrule the Dealer's decision).

ARCHETYPES

Each of the four Archetypes is aligned with one of the four Scores. Players select one Archetype for their characters. When a player uses the Score associated with the character's chosen Archetype in a Deal, he receives 1 Chip from the bank. Archetypes also inform each character's Traits and Angles, explained hereafter.

THE MAGICIAN (TRADE/SPADES)

The Magician is secretive and enigmatic, perhaps touched by a benign kind of madness. He is happiest when left to his own devices and relies on knowledge and intellect as guides along his chosen path.

Traits: Rational, inventive, tactless, zealous

Angles: Boxman, hacker, counterfeiter, underground mechanic, chemist

THE SURVIVOR (RESOURCES/DIAMONDS)

The Survivor relies on himself to get through each day. Despite this, he is far from being a lone wolf. He surrounds himself with a safety net of hidden cash, supplies, contacts, favors and bribes.

Traits: Self-reliance, vigilance, paranoid, driven

Angles: Hustler, investigator, bookie, retired "old school" cop, ex-convict

THE WARRIOR (VIOLENCE/CLUBS)

The Warrior is a battle-scarred fighter and a seeker of inner peace. Honor is second to glory. A true Warrior knows that the greatest fight is against oneself.

Traits: Fearless, deadly, honor-bound, proud

Angles: Bodyguard, hired killer, martial artist, amateur boxer

THE FOOL (EMOTION/HEARTS)

The Fool is both a charlatan and a storyteller; a weaver of lies and a speaker of truths. Few can trick one who lives by trickery...

Traits: Underestimated, experienced, over-confident, visible.

Angles: Street preacher, sex worker, mystic, panhandler, gypsy cab driver

TRAITS

Unlike Dust Devils, Traits are expressed as either a vice or a virtue. Otherwise, the rules are the same: choose any two Traits from the appropriate Archetype (or create your own), and if either of these Traits comes into play during a conflict, draw an additional card during the Deal. Or, if the character acts counter to the Trait, the player receives 1 chip. Like Dust Devils, players can only use one Trait per Deal.

ANGLES

A character's Angle is his occupation (or specialty, as it were) and takes the place of Dust Devils' Past and Present. If a character's Angle comes into play during the game, that player may discard and replace his *entire* hand with fresh cards (this is done before cards gained from Traits or gained/lost from the Zero are drawn). This may only be done once per conflict.

Note that while certain Angles are listed under specific Archetypes, these associations are not set in stone. For instance, a hitman's Archetype could be the Magician or the Survivor (even though the Warrior is an obvious choice). A rape crisis counselor might seem like a Survivor at first, but her behavior and spirit are more like that of a born Warrior.

A WORLD OF HURT

Harm works differently in Concrete Angels. When a player loses a Deal and receives Harm, the player subtracts the Harm from only one Score. The Harm always affects the Score that the losing player used in the Deal, regardless of the suits in the winning player's hand.

Should a player receive more Harm than his character currently has in a Score, he ignores the remaining Harm. For example, a character has only 3 points remaining in the Score he just used. He then gets whacked with 5 Harm. The player marks his Score down to 0. His player ignores the remaining 2 points.

THE ZERO

Every character has a dark past, but The Zero concerns itself with an even darker future. Like the Devil in Dust Devils, The Zero can be set from 1 to 3 at the start of a game session. Other than a name change, the Zero functions exactly the same as the Devil, including awarding bonus cards or penalizing cards with a 1-chip reward.

THE END

The End works very similarly to Dust Devils. When a character has a 0-rated Score, his next use of that Score in a Deal will be The End. The player can delay The End just as the Dust Devils rules explain.

When The End arrives, double the character's Zero rating (it's rated 1 to 3 each game session), and then use that doubled value to replace the Score. The player receives that many cards in the Deal. In addition, the Zero can award or penalize cards as is usual for all Deals. When it penalizes cards, the player also receives 1 chip.

WORD ON THE STREET

Concrete Angels first appeared as a free game called Sex & Violence. I re-wrote most of it to incorporate the mechanics Dust Devils. The inspiration for that Sex & Violence (and this one) is Frank Miller's "Sin City" and Andrew Vachss' Burke series of novels (as well as his other books and stories). Neo-noir and crime fiction may be popular genres, but Miller and Vachss are two of its masters.
Read Andrew Vachss unpublished first novel (*A Bomb Built in Hell*) here:
http://www.vachss.com/av_novels/bomb.pdf

Books by Andrew Vachss:
Down Here
The Getaway Man
Only Child
Pain Mangement
Dead and Gone
Choice of Evil
Safe House
False Allegations
Footsteps of the Hawk
Down in the Zero
Shella
Sacrifice
Ivy
Blossom
Hard Candy
Blue Belle
Strega
Flood

Graphic Novels by Frank Miller:
Sin City
A Dame To Kill For
The Big Fat Kill
That Yellow Bastard
Family Values
The Babe Wore Red
Sex & Violence

The AFTERWORD

In early 2002 when I wrote the first version of DUST DEVILS, I had no idea what was on the horizon. To my surprise and delight, people enjoyed the game. The game won *2002 Indie RPG Game of the Year*. Strangers communicated with me about the games they'd played. My game became a vehicle for connecting with others, and for them to imagine things as they never had before. For many, the Western was revitalized.

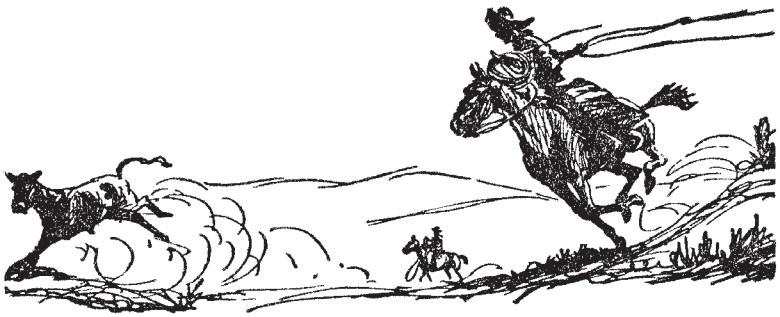
That first version was homage to *Unforgiven*, which remains my favorite Western film. I was then a casual Westen fan. I liked some films, but had seen only a handful of the most popular, contemporary movies. Now, I seek Westerns out. I have rediscovered what my father's generation already knew—that Western stories are captivating, and the actual history of the American West is just as captivating. What took me so long, I wonder?

I discovered something else since that first version, and as I shared ideas with fellow game creators interested in stories. I discovered what stories really are and how to create them. It's something I thought I knew all about five years ago. Looking back, I'm amazed how little I knew then about stories.

This book is for the many amazing friends I've made since creating DUST DEVILS. They are too many to list here, which means I've redeemed a Devil.

The End.

- Matt Snyder, 2006



CREATING A CHARACTER

STEP 1: Assign 13 points among your character's Scores. No score can exceed 5.

STEP 2: Create two traits for your character.

STEP 3: Choose a Past and Present. Assign four points between the two roles.

STEP 4: Detail the Devil. Then, set the initial Devil rating at 1, 2 or 3.

POKER HANDS & HARM VALUES

Use this chart to compare poker hands and find how much Harm each hand delivers to opponents. The hands below are rank from highest at the top to lowest at the bottom. When comparing "tied" hands, the highest card among the hands wins. If high card ties, compare suits. Suits rank from highest to lowest as follows: Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs.

ROYAL FLUSH—5 highest cards in sequence, all same suit: 10♦ J♦ Q♦ K♦ A♦	5 Harm
STRAIGHT FLUSH—5 cards in sequence, same suit: 5♣ 6♣ 7♣ 8♣ 9♣	5 Harm
FOUR OF A KIND—4 cards with identical rank: Q♣, Q♦, Q♥, Q♠	4 Harm
FULL HOUSE—3 cards with identical rank and 2 cards with identical rank: J♠ J♥ J♠ 9♦ 9♥	4 Harm
FLUSH—5 cards all same suit: 3♠ 6♠ 7♠ 10♠ Q♠.	3 Harm
STRAIGHT—Any 5 cards in sequence: 6♣ 7♦ 8♦ 9♥ 10♠.	3 Harm
THREE OF A KIND—3 cards with identical rank: K♣, K♥, K♠.	2 Harm
TWO PAIR—2 cards with identical rank: A♣, A♦, 8♥, 8♠.	2 Harm
PAIR—2 cards with identical rank: 5♦ 5♥	1 Harm
HIGH CARD—Highest available card: A♣	1 Harm

WILD CARDS – Jokers are Wild Cards. They count as any card necessary to complete any of the above combinations.

EARNING & SPENDING CHIPS

Earn chips by ...

OPTION	AWARD
Act counter to a Trait	1 chip
Act counter to the Devil	1 chip
Win Stakes in a conflict	Number of chips equal to Stakes wager

Spend chips to ...

OPTION	COST
Gain 1 additional card in the Deal	1 chip
Gain 1 additional card in the Draw	1 chip
Fold and avoid conflict consequences	1 chip
Bid to become Narrator	Highest chip bid
Recover 1 Score value from Harm	Current Score value + 1
Delay The End	Up to Devil rating in chips per 0-rated Score
Harm any character*	1 chip per point of Harm
Redeem any character Score by 1*	Current Score value + 1

* The player's character must be at The End to Harm or Redeem other characters.

DUST DEVILS

AN OLD WEST STORY GAME

www.chimera.info/dustdevils

WANTED

Name: _____

Hand	♤	♤	♤	♤	♤
Eye	♢	♢	♢	♢	♢
Guts	♧	♧	♧	♧	♧
Heart	♡	♡	♡	♡	♡

Trait: _____

Trait: _____

Used to be a _____ ( )

Now is a _____ ( )

Chips:

Devil: _____

_____

Rating: 1 2 3

DUST DEVILS

AN OLD WEST STORY GAME

www.chimera.info/dustdevils

WANTED

Name: _____

Hand	♤	♤	♤	♤	♤
Eye	♢	♢	♢	♢	♢
Guts	♧	♧	♧	♧	♧
Heart	♡	♡	♡	♡	♡

Trait: _____

Trait: _____

Used to be a _____ ( )

Now is a _____ ( )

Chips:

Devil: _____

_____

Rating: 1 2 3

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